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The Question of Revolution

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***Abstract*—Wildists argue that the end goal of conservation should be disrupting industrial society beyond repair: only this will preserve nature and nature's wildness to a degree that is both feasible and morally acceptable. This essay explains the idea of this anti-industrial reaction in more detail, focusing especially on various counter-arguments. Near the end, I provide an outline of the first tasks the revolutionary party should take, and explain how this is linked to the broader and explicit political goal of ending industry.**

I. Introduction

Since rebutting the eco-modernist alternative to revolution, wildists are left with justifying their own belief that at this point, the end of industry should be the end goal of the conservation movement. This essay does little to explain the moral foundations for this view. Most of that has already been explained, and a condensed presentation of our grievances is left for the future. For now I deal mostly with defining revolution in the context of conservation; respond to rebuttals of the idea; and explain alleged or apparent discrepancies between the idea and the rest of wildism.

Responses to rebuttals usually follow one or more of a handful of arguments. The first considers whether or not the negative consequence is a result of a mismatch between the outcome and progressive values or whether even wildist, anti-progressivists would consider it to be truly negative. This is an important point, since many would obviously regard collapse as a wholly negative thing. Second, I often compare the consequences of revolution to those that we will or are likely to face if no revolution occurs. And third, I question whether the criticism of revolution comes from bourgeois comfort, a result of people pampered by their lives in protected bubbles sustained by infrastructure and police forces. This pertains to both physical discomfort, like violence, and psychological discomfort, like the kind caused by moral relativism and other ambiguities of life.

The last bit is especially important. There are no clear answers to many of the problems mentioned in this essay. Unfortunately, in a world without the supernatural, man is left to determine for himself, and often at great risk of error, how to move through the world. Even acquiescing to prevailing conditions is a choice with potentially huge consequences. This clearly makes modern man uneasy. Afraid of violence, he cannot face the fact that existence is inherently violent, shielded as he is from directly interacting with this reality. Afraid of making decisions for himself, he submits himself to another, God or nation but invariably stronger than him, who makes those decisions instead. But once we become aware of our material condition and the fundamental uncertainty of life, we find ourselves making decisions in a way that can only accurately be described as "placing our bets." Although many find this to be a scary condition, I recommend that readers consider the metaphor of Jacob wrestling with God, unrelenting until he is blessed. He walks away with a wounded hip, but he gets what he demands. So too must we struggle with our condition. This essay is one such struggle, and it goes as follows:

In section II, I give the background of the wildist project.

In section III, I explain rewilding and the "tactical spectrum" of conservation.

In section IV, I explain the concept of revolution in the context of wildist conservation.

In section V, I address questions of feasibility, always the first topic to come up when revolution is mentioned. I argue that it is feasible, and easily so.

In section VI, I examine negative consequences, specifically those associated with nuclear technology, population, medicine, and human nature.

In section VII, I address alleged incompatibilities between the proposal and wildism, such as the seeming conflicts with materialist determinism, the critique of progress, belief in human folly, and anti-humanism.

Finally, I link all the considered limitations of a reaction, moral and practical, and conclude with a sketch of a reactionary strategy against industry.

II. Our Journey So Far

Talk of revolution is always difficult when it is not grounded in concrete historical conditions. Without the grounding, discussions become unthreaded by hypotheticals and ought-to-bes. But the task before us isn't to establish a blueprint for implementation; it is to discern the real options available to us at our present moment and to evaluate the morality of these options given our starting values. Let us recall, then, these starting values, and why

they clash with our present conditions so violently that we consider even speaking of revolution.

By now we've simplified the main points of wildism into three: scientific materialism, the critique of progress, and the obligation to rewild.

The first asserts that matter is all that exists—a simple idea, but one that shapes our whole approach to the world. Readers unfamiliar with the materialist worldview and its consequences, especially for wildism, ought to read "The Foundations of Wildist Ethics," Dawkins, 2011; Santayana, 1988; Wilson, 1998; and Wilson, 1978. It should be enough here to say that the core elements of postmodernism, Marxism, most progressivist ideologies, and every religion that believes in a supernatural realm are immediately invalidated by materialism, thereby narrowing the scope of meaningful analysis by quite a bit.

The critique of progress, the second central point of wildism, criticizes the belief that humans can implement their rational blueprints onto nature in order to create a fundamental improvement in the human condition. The critique is a sort of bridge between the materialist worldview and the normative components of rewilding, so it possesses both an empirical aspect and a normative one. That is, first wildists note that societies are not designed, but evolved, and that this makes much of the appeal of progressivism fade away. (In fact, it annihilates many progressivisms completely.) We also note that the project of progress may not even be a possible one, practically speaking.

But in the second component of our critique, the real site of struggle, we note the negative consequences of progress and why they don't live up to wildist values. In other words, it is not just simply that the progressivists are deluded for thinking that they can direct progress; we also say that we don't like what progress has done and can be expected to do. This is in contrast to progressivists who remain after our empirical critique, that is, those who are polemicists for the artificial modification of nature even as they realize that progress is something that occurs autonomously from them and humanity as a whole.

Then we move into our actual normative claims, rooted in our understanding of human evolution. Sometime around the late Pleistocene, cultural evolution became "unlinked" from biological evolution and began outpacing it at an ever more rapid speed. This unlinking is what has brought us civilizations, and underpinning it all is technical evolution, an apparently exponential process. It is this unlinked cultural evolution that is called "progress," and its polemicists argue that it has improved nature and the human condition. Many of the claims are factually true: civilizational development results in decreased violence, better medicine, and longer life expectancies, among other things. This is not, of course, because man collectively decided that he wanted those things and then achieved them. Rather, it is because the technical backbone of civilization demands them. Nevertheless, the progressivists say, these things have been good, so we should keep civilization.

Wildists, however, note that civilization is inherently bad for the thing they care for most: wildness (of course). The great indicator of this is the degradation of the world that wildness maintains, called "nature." One can see the difference between these conditions clearly by observing the wilderness and then the city, and up until this point in history the mathematical relationship between industrial humans and the wilderness has been a clear one: more industrial humans means more expansion and degradation, and therefore less wilderness. This is why throughout most of history the growth of civilization has been in obvious conflict with nature. In a great many respects, this is still the case.

However, recent trends are less clear. Industrial processes have become so efficient, it seems, that many of them are becoming "decoupled" from the need for more land and resources. This has caused the savviest progressivists to change their tune and advocate a revisionist account of rewilding, arguing for a sort of human/nature apartheid through the establishment of "island strongholds" for industrial civilization. In other words, inside of these islands civilization can continue its progressive project while the rest of the world can remain free from its intrusion. Wild animals can roam free, and—crucially—natural processes that maintain resources necessary for civilization, much better than humans have been able to maintain them, can continue without disruptive modification.

A more extensive discussion of this proposal can be found in "Refuting the Apartheid Alternative." In the end, I explain that wildists have to oppose the project of civilization even and especially in the case of apartheid. This is because, even if apartheid was possible to the extent that the proponents hope it will be, (1) it still assumes that human nature is fair game for modification; (2) it would threaten those who decide to live on the other side of the divide; (3) it would not solve the fundamental conflict between civilization and nature's wildness, even if the domination ends up less physical.

In other words, wildists are left with a range of tasks that we call "rewilding"—true rewilding—and instead of seeking to preserve civilization, these tasks must be

aimed at dismantling it or, at the very least, they must disregard preservation of civilization as a truly important concern. Let's discuss this aspect of wildism more.

III. The Obligation to Rewild

The conservation movement is home to various factions with different, sometimes diametrically opposed, strategies, depending on the starting values. Wildists advocate a strategy called "rewilding," which aims above all to restore the autonomy of nature and which hosts a variety of tactics placed along what is called "the tactical spectrum." (This is separate from the rewilding program, an important tool devised by conservation biologists and organizations like The Wildlands Network. It will be mentioned later.) One side of the tactical spectrum consists of moderate, usually personal actions, like camping, naturalism, and studying evolutionary science. The middle consists of more socially impactful and "legitimate" actions, like litigation, conservation work, journalism, and scientific work. And the other side consists of radical, very impactful, and often "illegitimate" or illegal actions, like monkeywrenching. Most of normal conservation takes place on the middle of the spectrum.

Nearly all social movements have a tactical spectrum, and the most robust have elements all helping each other through varying degrees of radicalism. Martin Luther King, for instance, was greatly benefitted by the riots of the time, which were often spurred on by black nationalists.

The conservationists who spearheaded much of the contemporary movement put a lot of effort into building a robust spectrum, each of the more radical elements positioned specifically to benefit the more moderate efforts before them. This is best exemplified by a David Brower quote:

> *The Sierra Club made the Nature Conservancy look reasonable. I founded Friends of the Earth to make the Sierra Club look reasonable. Then I founded Earth Island Institute to make Friends of the Earth look reasonable. Earth First! now makes us look reasonable. We're still waiting for someone else to come along and make Earth First! look reasonable.*

Reform movements generally only need to occupy the middle of the spectrum with perhaps temporary diversions into the radical end. The task of revolution, however, means shifting the whole movement further to the radical end. This is a delicate task. If most of the movement is at the moderate end and only a few groups engage in highly radical actions, they will be called terrorists, and because they will be easily isolated from the rest of the movement they could be stamped out. Furthermore, if the radical factions fail to actually occupy the spectrum and their actions benefit only their own efforts (i.e., if they are not "linked" to the moderate efforts) than they will also be easily isolated and stamped out. Finally, the radical factions should take care not to move the entire movement to the radical end of the spectrum, lest they delegitimize the entire movement. Again, the role of the party is to build the spectrum, link the factions, and radicalize the movement, slowly and thanklessly. It is not to ignite a revolution immediately, but to creep along a spectrum until a catalyst makes way for more radical advances than would be normally allowed.

In our work, we must take care to build only a wildness-centered spectrum. It is possible, for instance, to be engaged in environmental litigation but for management or industrial purposes. And we've seen plenty of "environmental" monkeywrenching that had more to do with social justice than it had to do with restoring nature's autonomy. There's also the perpetual threat of revisionism, as I make clear in "Refuting the Apartheid Alternative." So in our efforts to build and link, we should only build and link those efforts that benefit wildness-centered conservation. Otherwise, a wildness-centered revolution will become harder or even impossible.

The underlying point of rewilding is this: no matter where on the spectrum specific projects are, the moral undertone is advocacy for nature no matter the consequences for civilization. Nature first, civilization only if it doesn't interfere. This is the ethic espoused by Muir, and we must be sure that it is the ethic that binds all of rewilding together.

IV. The Question of Revolution

A. What we mean by revolution

It is one thing to argue that we should aim to rewild without regard for civilization; it is quite another to advocate comprehensive action aimed at attacking it, or at least its industrial incarnation. The former does not require a change in fundamental structures of society per se. But to call for revolution is to implicate oneself in an active threat to society and to therefore risk the clench of an iron fist.

The term "revolution" is rather vague, so let's get more specific: wildists are proposing a conscious and relentless effort to disrupt industry beyond repair. Tangibly, this means that airplanes, paved roads, global communications networks, the internet, and other such infrastructure

will be annihilated or in disarray to such an extent that they will only regress, because the cooperative energy necessary to restore them would be impossible to muster up and coordinate in a fast enough manner. Note that although annihilation is a goal to the extent possible, the main goal is to prevent industry from being able to recover.

B. Terminology

Immediately it becomes apparent that although "revolution" is technically an accurate descriptor of the wildist proposal, it is not at all an intuitive use of the term. In the past, "revolution" has been used to mean a step on the ladder of progress: the Industrial Revolution, the sexual revolution, etc. Related to this connotation, the word is also strongly associated with far-left groups, especially communism. So as a matter of branding, let's dispose of the term for the rest of the essay.

In lieu of other terms like "revolution," "counter-revolution," or "restoration," the institute has chosen "rewilding," "collapse," and "reaction." The latter is by far the preferable term since it gets to the heart of the anti-progressivism of the wildist mission, and, like "conservation," speaks to the conservative values of our members: courage, ordered freedom (wildness), cognizance of human folly, loyalty especially to relations, an appreciation for nature, a recognition of the value of struggle, a disdain for the jolting revolutionary projects of the progressivists, etc.

Although this may all seem very semantic, having our own discourse, separate from the left-wing discourse so strongly associated with revolt, is an important aspect of our project. For instance, because of the ironic character of late industrial life, "revolution" has become an impotent term, whereas "reaction" remains difficult to coopt, an off-limits word especially in the context of dominant left humanist values. This leaves us with more power to shape our own image and project, and it makes clear that this revolt is true revolt, not revolt in quotation marks.

V. Feasibility

A. Collapse May Be Inevitable

In the long run, industrial collapse is inevitable. I speak practically of course, because one can dream up many hypotheticals to counter this claim, but in any realistic evaluation of our material limits, we can be quite certain that those hypotheticals will stay right where they are: beyond the horizon and out of reach. This is before we even investigate whether those scenarios are desirable.

Our question is whether collapse is inevitable within a reasonable amount of time from the present. And although politically taboo, the answer "yes" is a defensible one.

I consider this question of inevitability for two reasons. One is dealt with in section VII.A, so I will not repeat it here. Another is just the fact that so many people, especially young or uneducated people, do not seem to regard collapse very seriously, not as a distinct possibility without wildist political action, and certainly not as a political goal. But collapse may well happen without us, and I hope the following sections make this clear.

1) Existential and Catastrophic Threats

Consider, for instance, the list of existential threats facing industrial society, in some cases the whole of humanity, and in some cases the whole of life. These threats used to amount to only natural ones, things like super volcanoes, asteroids, natural climate change, and so forth. But industry has rapidly added a handful more and continues to so at the same rapid pace. So quickly are the threats growing that numerous institutes, organizations, and conferences have formed to analyze them, with names such as the Global Catastrophic Risk Conference, the Future of Humanity Institute, the Center for the Study of Existential Risk, and the Future of Life Institute. In other words, this is no wingnut sermon: the threats are real, and if industrial society continues a basic requirement is figuring out how to deal with them without catastrophic consequences. Implicit in that obligation is coming up with solutions that do not devolve into totalitarianism or otherwise reduce quality of life beyond what is acceptable (ignoring the fact that current industrial conditions have arguably already reached that point, especially for most living humans).

There are many lists out there, and I'll not bore you with in-depth coverage of each threat. The ones of note include biotechnology, the threat of a pandemic, extreme climate change, and artificial intelligence. More important for the purposes of this text are abstract arguments that for the most part can be applied to all of them.

First, we need to always consider that if a given technology can be used for good, it can also be used for bad, and in the hands of malicious actors or in the context of major warfare, this bad (in relation to the technologies in question) can easily mean the collapse of civilization at least across a large geographical area. At the very least it could contribute to collapse if it converged with other threats or material obstacles to effective counteraction.

This is a major argument in Martin Rees' *Our Final Century*, where he notes terrorism as one of the major existential threats facing industrial civilization.

Note that this also functions as an argument for collapse. If a technology can be used for either good or bad, then when the repercussions of the technology can be as extreme as those of bio- or nanotechnology, we are justified in at least asking if the risk is worth it. And given that the development of these technologies is almost certainly inevitable with the continued existence of their industrial base, arguing that their development is *not* worth it necessarily implicates the arguer in an anti-industrial politic.

Second, increased management is nearly always a proposed solution to these problems, but this solution faces at least two major problems.

For one thing, increased management has a practical limit, since it requires energy input, and that energy has to come from somewhere. And especially in the case of humans, the energy required to maintain the management systems may actually end up being a net loss and unsustainable. Joseph Tainter (1990) argues that this bureaucratic overhead and the associated political inertia is a major reason why societies collapse: they eventually reach a point of diminishing returns and their political systems are left so turgid that they can't respond effectively to the threats they face. Diamond (2005) argues something similar.

Furthermore, management schemes face inevitable failure, something that may be acceptable with current threats, but in the context of developing threats is a lot more dangerous. David Ehrenfeld's "The Fable of Managed Earth," reprinted in *Hunter/Gatherer 1.1*, gives a more thorough treatment of this argument, and his sources are also worth checking out (see Perrow, 1984; Tainter and Patzek, 2012). One quote from Tainter and Patzek is particularly insightful:

> *The* Deepwater Horizon *was a normal accident, a system accident. Complex technologies have...ways of failing that humans cannot foresee. The probability of similar accidents may now be reduced, but it can be reduced to zero only when declining [energy returns] makes deep-sea production energetically unprofitable. It is fashionable to think that we will be able to produce renewable energies with gentler technologies, with simpler machines that produce less damage to the earth, the atmosphere, and people. We all hope so, but we must approach such technologies with a dose of realism and a long-term perspective.*

Slavin (2011) gives another useful example. He first explains that the stock market is now largely run by algorithms that no human understands, something called "algo-trading" or "black box trading." In fact, we are so ignorant of the algorithms that it is the job of some companies to go in and pull some of them out, give them cute names like "the knife," and explain what they do. The problem, Slavin explains, is that in May 2010, 9% of the stock market disappeared in just seconds, and to this day no one knows what caused it. A 2013 article from *Nature* echoed this threat, the authors explaining that finance functions on top of a "machine ecology beyond human response time" (Johnson, et al., 2013). In other words, even if we wanted to manage these systems, we don't have the knowledge or ability to do it.

As a final example, just because I want this management argument put to rest, consider an actual existential threat, the one of a global pandemic, particularly one caused by a genetically engineered pathogen. Although management would certainly be part of any solution to this threat, and seems to be one of the few viable ones, it is not nearly good enough to be reasonable alone. Just last year the Center for Disease Control accidentally sent live anthrax and deadly H5N1 samples to two different labs and a poultry lab, respectively. Scientists at an NIH lab also recently discovered nearly 330 unapproved vials of an array of deadly pathogens, including smallpox, dengue, and spotted fever, in a cold-storage room. Mistakes like these are not acceptable when the bar for disaster in cases of mistakes is so low.

Moving back to the larger discussion of anthropogenic existential threats: when we are piling them on so quickly, it gets progressively more likely that two or more will converge. In this scenario, each individual threat need not be an existential threat by itself, and can instead be some weaker version of its extreme potential; but combined with weaker versions of other threats, everything together can amount to a great threat to industrial society.

Arguably this is the situation we live in today. ISIS embodies the existential threat of terrorists super-empowered with modern technologies; the effects of climate change have not even reached their most devastating, but we know that at least a few major cities will inevitably be hit and likely go under within the next century; biotechnology, nanotechnology, and artificial intelligence are being developed at a rapid pace and it appears that they will hit us at relatively the same time, leaving our management systems scrambling in response; and so forth. It *may* be that even without an organized anti-industrial effort, industrial society will be pulled apart by these pressures.

And in all this we should note the nonchalance with which many technicians regard these threats. For sure, technicians form a major portion of the membership in humanitarian groups dedicated to these issues. But for the most part scientists and engineers are focused myopically on their technical work because it gives them psychological satisfaction, and the reasons for joining humanitarian groups are arguably the same. And in any case, these concerns and the real, tangible actions that they call for are often only afterthoughts to the scientists. Many point out that Oppenheimer and Einstein had great regrets for their parts in developing the atomic bomb. But the bomb was still developed, still used, and is still here.

I usually face a great deal of criticism when I make these claims, no doubt because they get personal and, rather than being abstract musings, implicate real people in their real actions that are affecting the real world. But I stand by this critique, and very often I respond by quoting a passage by Richard Hamming (1998), a major contributor to the field of information science (which I study) and a mathematician who worked on the Manhattan Project:

> *Shortly before the first field test…a man asked me to check some arithmetic he had done, and I agreed, thinking to fob it off on some subordinate. When I asked what it was, he said, "It is the probability that the test bomb will ignite the whole atmosphere." I decided I would check it myself! The next day when he came for the answers I remarked to him, "The arithmetic was apparently correct but I do not know about the formulas for the capture cross sections for oxygen and nitrogen—after all, there could be no experiments at the needed energy levels." He replied, like a physicist talking to a mathematician, that he wanted me to check the arithmetic not the physics, and left. I said to myself, "What have you done, Hamming, you are involved in risking all of life that is known in the Universe, and you do not know much of an essential part?" I was pacing up and down the corridor when a friend asked me what was bothering me. I told him. His reply was, "Never mind, Hamming, no one will ever blame you."*

Such a response can be called nothing but criminal.

2) Past Collapses and Our Current Condition

Our new threats necessarily involve a degree of speculation, but many of the most serious are old news, the kinds of things that have brought down those great empires we read about in history books. Indeed, our current world is uncannily similar to many of these civilizations right before collapse.

Once again, this is not a wingnut sermon, and many of the foremost members of the industrial elite have argued similar things (Diamond, 2005; Rees, 2003; Tainter, 1990; Wright, 2004). Diamond, for instance, notes that of the twelve major environmental problems facing industrial civilization, the first eight have historically contributed to collapse. He also notes that overpopulation was a major problem underlying all collapses, and only a quick look at the statistics will show that the demography of our current world fits the definition of "collapse-prone." I do not wish to devolve into doom and gloom scenarios. As we have seen, the Green Revolution in the 60s and 70s pushed population disaster down the road by a few decades, and the so-called Gene Revolution, or biotech-reliant agriculture, has the potential to do the same. Still, we should recognize the threats.

Another great cause of past collapses is a widening gap between the poor and rich. In fact, one study, much publicized as being "funded by NASA" (which was true in only a limited sense), argued for a model they called HANDY (human and nature dynamics), which recognizes stratification as a primary element of most past collapses (Motesharrel, Rivas, & Kalnay, 2014). And the gap between the rich and poor in industrial societies, *especially* in a global context, does not tell a good story. One report put out by the World Economic Forum states, "In developed and developing countries alike, the poorest half of the population often controls less than 10% of its wealth" (Black, et al., 2015).

Overall, it should be enough to say here that collapse is rather common throughout history, and industrial civilization has not yet shown that it will escape the same problems that make that fact true. Of course, different collapses have distinct characters, and although interdependence of complex technologies make the whole process go quickly that it ends within a few decades, some civilizational collapses have occurred over a period of a century or two, a process interspersed with various technical and political crises. Rome is a major example of this kind of collapse. But industry could be either one. Slow collapse is easier to imagine, especially with the way threats like climate change are playing out, but Greer (2015) has offered a theory he calls "catabolic collapse," which notes that the process in most complex societies is self-reinforcing, especially in relation to technical regression.

Finally, although this is strictly speaking weak evidence for the argument, it is an indication that the argument is defensible: note that in all of these discussions

about collapse—whether it be from Greer in his discussion of its "catabolic" nature, Tainter and his arguments around diminishing returns, the HANDY model and its emphasis on social inequality, or Diamond's focus on ecological problems—modern society always comes out looking bad, and every one of the authors recognize this. Tainter, for instance, argues that industrial society has already reached the point of diminishing returns, and Diamond regards collapse as such a real possibility that he felt compelled to give a handful of examples of societies that avoided it, pointing out what they did to make that possible. Clearly collapse could be a part of our future, and we ought to regard it seriously, even if it is politically taboo to do so.

B. Industry Could Not Be Rebuilt

Conversations about industrial collapse in the context of wildist politics follow a strict script: first, the non-wildist attempts to determine if the wildist is crazy; second, the non-wildist insists that the political goal is unfeasible; and third, the non-wildist, when shown that it is all too feasible, will say that it doesn't matter, since humans are creators and will just start it all over again.

In many ways this last bit is irrelevant. If ending industry is feasible and morally desirable, then whether or not some future action will undo the moral good is a tangential consideration. Furthermore, even a little thought will make it obvious that rebuilding industry wouldn't be immediately possible. That's worth something.

But we can go further. If industrial society collapses, the most likely future will be the end of any industrial society ever. That is, although future kinds of complex societies are feasible, another industrial one would be impossible. And even in the case of other kinds of complex societies (that are more advanced than agricultural ones), humans would for centuries be unable to embark on such a project after industrial collapse.

Speaking to the later point, Wright (2004) warns that the difference between industrial collapse and past collapses is this civilization's global reach. In the past, the project of civilization continued after collapse because it was a distributed project—many different civilizations were developing across different geographies, so the end of one did not necessarily affect all the others. But the end of this civilization could mean the end of the civilizing project for centuries, since the repercussions would reach all parts of the globe, and since even many non-industrial nations depend heavily on the industrial economy.

Kaczynski (2010) also makes a useful difference between small-scale technology and organization-dependent technology. Small-scale technology includes spears, huts, small boats, and other such items that can be built by an individual or small group. But organization-dependent technology requires an amount of management and organization that usually implies layered technical development, making any technologies on the highest layer impossible without the preceding layers. He gives the example of refrigeration technology and then writes:

> *So it is clear that if the industrial system were once thoroughly broken down, refrigeration technology would quickly be lost. The same is true of other organization-dependent technology. And once this technology had been lost for a generation or so it would take centuries to rebuild it, just as it took centuries to build it the first time around. Surviving technical books would be few and scattered. An industrial society, if built from scratch without outside help, can only be built in a series of stages: You need tools to make tools to make tools to make tools.... A long process of economic development and progress in social organization is required. And, even in the absence of an ideology opposed to technology, there is no reason to believe that anyone would be interested in rebuilding industrial society. The enthusiasm for "progress" is a phenomenon peculiar to the modern form of society, and it seems not to have existed prior to the 17th century or thereabouts.*

Although he argues that small-scale technologies do not regress, or at least that he knows of no examples, Diamond (2005) gives numerous instances of regression in small-scale technologies, such as boat-building techniques. In other words, it is very much possible for industrial society to in some areas regress entirely to primitive technical levels.

But, as I said before, it's not just that it would take a long time to rebuild industry; at this point such a project would be impossible. The astronomer and mathematician Fred Hoyle (1964), who coined the term "Big Bang Theory," put it this way:

> *It has often been said that, if the human species fails to make a go of it here on Earth, some other species will take over the running. In the sense of developing high intelligence this is not correct. We have, or soon will have, exhausted the necessary physical prerequisites so far as this planet is concerned.*

> *With coal gone, oil gone, high-grade metallic ores gone, no species however competent can make the long climb from primitive conditions to high-level technology. This is a one-shot affair. If we fail, this planetary system fails so far as intelligence is concerned. The same will be true of other planetary systems. On each of them there will be one chance, and one chance only.*

Hoyle was obviously not a wildist, and wished to preserve civilization, as most of the thinkers cited here do. But even with this bias in mind, he notes the fragility of the industrial project with surprising starkness: "this is a one-shot affair." And he's right. It's not just that resources are depleting, which is with the right technology not always a pressing problem; a much bigger issue is that these resources are or are becoming accessible only with technologies that themselves require the resources. This is what sets up the self-reinforcing process of catabolic collapse Greer argued for, mentioned earlier. We've set fire to the very same ladder that got us to the rooftop.

To some extent, this applies to agricultural civilizations as well. Soil degradation is one of the more pressing environmental issues we are currently facing, and it has been exacerbated by the industrial techniques developed by the Green Revolution of the 60s and 70s. Much agriculture is only practicable on the land it uses now because of those industrial techniques, which rely heavily on oil, something that is not only running out, but is, for obvious reasons, geopolitically unfortunate. Should those geopolitical factors become more tenuous, as they have been doing for decades and are likely to continue to with the rise of ISIS, the consequences for agriculture could be severe; if industry began to collapse wholesale, the consequences for agriculture *would* be severe. And it's not as though the soil would heal itself in a timely manner, so thorough has been the degradation.

C. If Past Revolutions Are Any Indication…

Of course, wildism goes beyond stating that collapse is the lesser of evils and advocates aiding the process as the most moral option available. Of course, because this is an entirely different proposal from past revolutionary efforts, sufficiently assessing its feasibility is impossible. However, if past revolutions are any indication, the wildist project is not out of the question.

Logically speaking, and not at all encouraging it, an anti-industrial reaction of the scale considered here would require a faction engaged in illegal activity aimed at dismantling industrial infrastructure—monkeywrenching on steroids. In past revolutions, isolated acts of violence have usually not been very successful. This is not true across the board, and in very significant cases it is not true at all, but as a general rule, isolated violence by a vanguard gets its individuals branded terrorists, easily separated from any base of support, and eradicated. Successful revolutions have overcome this by properly interacting with the tactical spectrum. Communists, for instance, relied heavily on the strike tactic, which often amounted to rioting in order to shut down industrial production to lend credence to whatever their demands were at the time.

Earth First! is a good example from the environmental movement. Rather than simply going out and sabotaging logging equipment and powerlines in the dead of night, as the Bolt Weevils did before, Earth First! chapters would occupy forests as a group, and they included individuals both willing and unwilling to engage in illegal action (Lee, 1995). Then, at opportune times, some members occasionally went out in a forest they were protecting to spike the trees with nails that made it dangerous for loggers to carry on their work without a full survey of the area; or they would pour sand in the tanks of heavy equipment vehicles, delaying deforestation for a while.

That's not to say that some acts in the dead of night have not been helpful to revolutionary movements. Again an example comes from Earth First! Not too long ago, a group of individuals splintered off from Earth First! to form a group called the Earth Liberation Front, or ELF. It was mostly a left-wing group, and so is not entirely relevant to wildist efforts, but strategically they provoke some interesting questions. ELF members were known for arson. In particular, they used a cheaply made incendiary device that involved flammable fluid in a plastic jug, a sponge in the handle area, and a wick. This device was used for multiple actions against university labs, especially biotechnology labs, radio towers, and some other, less significant actions against multi-million dollar homes (not occupied) and the Vail ski resort in Colorado.

The ELF members never actually left Earth First!, and most of the cells have now been captured, sent to jail, or released after serving time. Since then, several movies and books have been written about the groups, and one of the most surprising details to come out of it was that many of the main members were very active participants in above-ground environmental organizations, like Greenpeace. Despite this, the FBI would almost certainly have never caught them were it not for the betrayal of one member, Jake Ferguson, who is now directly responsible for the arrest of the largest and most prolific ELF cell to date.

Despite the ELF arsons being committed in the darkness, they have received wide support. Whole portions of the environmental movement still repeatedly speak out in support of the ELF—not necessarily their actions of course, but of the message they hoped to send. This displays an incredibly skillful use of the tactical spectrum, and is undoubtedly part of the reason the cells were able to achieve what they did.

I do not suggest that people engaged in illegal actions should also be involved in above ground organizations. In fact, I do not suggest that people be involved in illegal actions at all. But the ELF does show how some hypothetical future effort might play out, given the right circumstances.

But in the context of history, Earth First! and the ELF are and were still rather weak movements. A more powerful and impressive movement came from Russia: the Bolsheviks. This is a group that at the beginning of the revolution had only 8,400 members total, and far fewer active ones, and it brought an entire country to its knees. What's more, they used tactics still quite relevant for revolutions taking place in industrial societies, as Selznick (1952) has aptly shown.

This level of organization would be more than sufficient for a revolution against industrial society, given other uncontrollable external factors, like economic turmoil or something of the sort. Assuming that these are in place, and assuming that a larger, more legitimate movement is also in place (in the Bolshevik's case it was the labor movement), anti-industrialists would be able to orchestrate one or more major blows to the technical infrastructure sustaining the prevailing order.

D. Expanding the Scope of What Is Possible

In all honestly, the question of whether an anti-industrial reaction is possible is far less interesting and important than whether it is moral. Most of the time people don't see a reaction as feasible because they are bound by industrial moralities, but history shows that in times of great upheaval, people tend to lose their inhibitions and get swept up in a fervor. Revolutions are not the only examples: WWII's total war strategy also invoked the phenomenon, as did much of the civil rights movement, and many of the presidential campaigns after the Great Depression. And of course, the French and Russian Revolutions provide examples of people being swept up by revolutionary fervor and doing things they would otherwise have been too lethargic to do.

Furthermore, people believe and are motivated by the oddest and most demonstrably false ideologies. Most religions fit the bill nowadays, but they are a somewhat unfair example because of their ancient, ingrained nature. But Scientology, which has no ancient history, hosts some of the most absurd beliefs one can think of, yet motivates great swaths of people to berate the IRS to get the church out of tax investigations. And some black nationalists believe in ideologies about icemen, which reach a similar level of absurdity as Scientology. The problem clearly isn't getting people to believe things; much more pressing is making sure that the ideology you are popularizing is *true* and will *actually* deal with the problems people hear you giving voice to.

If we let go of politeness, we see that the possibilities for action, before constraining them with morality, are actually terrifying in their power.

Consider, for instance, that the internet is functional because of something called the Domain Name System (DNS). Periodically, though, DNS servers need to have their keys renewed, a hierarchical process that at the very top includes only seven keys, each held by a different individual, each individual a part of a distinct geographical territory, all of whom meet several times a year to renew the DNS keys (Ball, 2014). Without only seven keys, entire portions of the internet would be in disarray.

Or consider how fragile our physical infrastructure is. Multiple news stories have popped up in recent years of individuals who accidentally cut off portions of the internet to large geographical territories by damaging fiber optic cables. In one case, the damage was caused by an anchor being dragged along the ocean floor (Singel, 2008).

As another example, a report was recently issued naming just nine electric substations that would shut down all three power grids in the US, causing a blackout that could last more than a year (Smith, U.S. risks national blackout from small-scale attack, 2014). Not long before the report became known, some group orchestrated a highly skilled attack on a California substation by shooting the radiators, causing the station's electronics to overheat and shut down (Smith, Assault on California power stations raises alarm potential for terrorism, 2014). No suspects have yet been identified.

Finally, people oftentimes criticize the idea of industrial collapse as a feasible goal because it would obviously cause at least some terrible things, which could motivate people to stop, or keep them from supporting the effort altogether. But this is blatantly untrue: if industrial communications infrastructure at that point is falling apart, then many populations of people may not even end

up hearing about events on the other side of the world. The limit in this case is by no means a practical one.

Naturally, these examples likely inspire some revulsion (and some should). But that's just my point. I do not suggest that people engage in some of the actions above—and I do not just say that sarcastically—but I bring them up to make clear that feasibility is *not* what we should be talking about. Instead, we should be talking about what is moral, what we ought and ought not to do given our current conditions. Feasibility is far from our greatest problem. I'll consider some of those moral questions now.

VI. Negative Consequences

In "The Foundations of Wildist Ethics" I already made the case for wildist morality, and in "Refuting the Apartheid Alternative" I argued against one of the only seemingly viable alternatives to collapse as a way of fulfilling that morality. However, another way to attack collapse as an option worth pursuing is noting the consequences of it and asking, "Is this what you *really* want?" These arguments are powerful, and some of them ought to be deeply considered. (Others are just nonsense.) I've tried to pick out the most prescient here.

Keep in mind, though, that the wildist argument is not that collapse is on the whole a good thing in any absolute sense. At most we say that it is the best option available given our starting values. Furthermore, in "Refuting the Apartheid Alternative" I outlined one scenario likely if the technicians had their way, and the trade-offs it presents are at least just as bad, if not worse. Unfortunately, we are in a time where any solution is going to have extremely distasteful elements. The point is to respond in a way that properly aligns with our values.

One last comment. In considering the consequences of collapse, we cannot imagine things to proceed in a simple way. For the most part, those involved in an anti-industrial reaction will neither be responsible for much of the turmoil that will be necessary for their effort to be viable, nor will they appear to be responsible for much of what they do. Part of what separates a revolutionary effort from a terroristic one is that a terroristic one believes itself to have more power than it does. It thinks in a simple, vulgar manner, believing that if the right people issue a direct hit in just the right way at just the right time, revolution will ensue and the goal will be achieved. But a revolutionary effort is slower, more methodical, with a whole-system view. It realizes that action must take place across a broad base, and revolutionaries must necessarily have an experimental, "see-what-works" attitude just as surely as they must be committed to a single plan of action where appropriate. It is the difference between the Russian Nihilists, who planted bombs and committed assassinations, and the winning Communists, who orchestrated large-scale strikes, engaged in violence at the far end of the tactical spectrum in only necessary and easily supportable instances, built broad-based coalitions, elicited the support of intelligentsia, and so forth. Wildists should attempt to engage in the latter class of radical action.

A. Nuclear Technology, Disease Centers, etc.

Perhaps one of the strongest arguments against collapse is the class of technologies that require constant maintenance, but that would in the case of failure have devastating or potentially devastating consequences. To be clear, there is no real solution to this problem, especially because it is so highly contingent on unpredictable future circumstances. Many responses are still worth considering if in the future they become more relevant to revolutionaries. For instance, perhaps in many cases a slow process of decommissioning these technologies is possible, and their trade-offs—preserving some technical infrastructure, for one—would be considered worth it. But for now such musing is speculative and a little unhinged. We would do better to focus on what our immediate actions should be, and we can be assured that it doesn't cast us immediately into the moral quandary of having to figure out what to do with terrifying technical systems.

That said, the collapse of these technical systems would not by themselves be enough to discount the whole project of collapse. I say this tentatively, and am willing to back off on the strength of the statement with proper counter-argument, but for now it seems a justifiable position. Here's the argument.

Of the class of technologies in question, only a handful would make a wildist reevaluate the political project of an anti-industrial reaction: disease centers and labs, nuclear reactors, various technologies associated with high-tech physics experiments, and high-tech weapons.

Out of these four, I do not regard the problem of nuclear technology as *particularly* dangerous—that is, it is no more dangerous than other problems that come up when considering collapse. This may seem counter-intuitive, and I have faced quite a bit of resistance from others in the environmentalist and conservationist movements for the opinion. But the data shows that although nuclear meltdown is by no means a good thing, it is more effective at decimating artifice than it is at decimating nature. For instance, the Chernobyl Exclusion Zone is in a sur-

prisingly healthy state from the perspective of conservation biology, and only a few decades after the nuclear incident (Deryabina, et al., 2015). Fukushima shows less promising results for wildlife, but it was very recent, and tests from shortly after the Chernobyl incident showed similar results. Again, the wildlife rebound in the Exclusion Zone has taken several decades.

Obviously this doesn't mean arguing *for* nuclear meltdown, nor does it mean that we should regard it as inconsequential or of minimal importance. But it is not the worst thing possible, and in fact functions as an argument for industrial collapse before it functions as an argument for the opposite. That is, nuclear meltdown for the most part affects a limited geographical area, whereas industry affects the entire planet and in extreme ways; meltdown is temporary, and after the initial disaster leaves time for healing, whereas industrial processes are perpetual; meltdown causes some damage to nature, but also damages industrial civilization and keeps it from being rebuilt, whereas industry destroys nature at a rapid pace while greatly reinforcing the architecture of civilization. As one professor put it, "We're not saying the radiation levels [in Chernobyl] are good for the animals; we know it damages their DNA, but human habitation and development of the land are worse for wildlife" (Wendle, 2015).

Of course, these arguments are not likely to be convincing, because they are so far removed from normal human perspective. It seems unfathomable, even heinous, to imply that there is a lesser of evils when the evils before us are so wretched. Unfortunately, however, this is the situation we are in, and choosing to do nothing is, in fact, a choice. Also, I ask that readers hark back to my arguments for normative scientific investigation in "The Foundations of Wildist Ethics" (especially section II.D.3). I point out that many of the questions facing us are of such great scale that we actually have no built in or intuitive ways of addressing them. This becomes especially clear, for example, in the case of moral reasoning toward large populations, and in some cases we may have to simply say that we don't know the answer, that there is no justifiable response, that in some cases we cannot proceed with surety but instead must "place our bets."

Because these technologies and the implications of their use or destruction are of such consequence, I can't give a definitive answer here. I do, however, encourage creating a culture within the reactionary cadres that does not accept flippant attitudes and is serious about the problems before us. A radical political effort gains its strength from its moral resolve, and one way to ensure failure is to spread the message that you simply want to see the world burn. The point is not to see the world burn; to the contrary, these discussions are born out of a deep and passionate love for wild nature and a disdain with the massive degradation that it has suffered. We humans are bound to make mistakes at some time or another, but keeping this core ethical imperative in mind will at the very least ensure that those kinds of mistakes won't be the norm of the anti-industrial reaction.

This mostly addresses the other three kinds of technologies mentioned above. Other aspects particular to one or more of them will be addressed in later sections—for instance, section VI.C below will address many problems particular to disease centers.

But I would like to point out that, once again, the problems associated with these technologies are at least as much an argument for collapse as they are an argument against it. For one thing, if their power is so devastating, then the continued existence of industrial society does nothing to change the inherent instability their very existence continues to cause. Recall, once again, that a technology can be used for bad just as surely as it can be used for good. And giving only a certain class of individuals the power to manage that technology is far from an adequate solution; indeed, history shows us that this merely sets the stage for a more terrible future disaster, one where the primary victims of the disaster have been disenfranchised of any significant power to resist.

Furthermore, the longer industry carries on, the more powerful and dangerous the technologies become. By waiting, we only put ourselves in a worse situation and, given the normalcy of collapse, likely push off a smaller disaster now for a much greater disaster later. Even now the technologies in question are mind-boggling. Some physics experiments, for instance, have an infinitesimal chance, but a chance nonetheless, of creating a black hole that could consume the universe. Now, you do not need to worry about this at all. The chance is really, really, small—less likely than every flying plane crashing in the same spot at this very moment—and in fact some other highly speculative theories suggest that the black holes would be innocuous. The point is simply that already we are at a technical level where talk about these things doesn't make one batshit crazy. Imagine the power of future technologies, and the consequences they could hold.

Finally, remember that even in the absence of full-blown collapse, some failures are inevitable. Disease centers, as has been mentioned, do not prevent error that could easily devolve into catastrophe. As technologies get more powerful, the presence of such errors becomes ever more serious.

B. Population

Conservation's great elephant in the room has always been population. There seems no good way to address the problem, and any civilized solution, with the possible exception of a market-based one, would rub up against basic civil liberties.

Furthermore, there is large-scale denial regarding the actual issues, even more so than the denial surrounding climate change. Many are convinced that population isn't even an issue, and even the most basic of Malthus' calculations—which are definitively true—have been rejected or ignored as doomsdaying. This is in part because of how violently the issues of population clash with prevailing progressivist values. But it is also because of the strategically abhorrent campaign against population that took place in the 70s. The primary campaigners utilized "crisis" rhetoric that comes so easily with discussions about population, and they dreamed up fantastical scenarios that they had only marginal evidence for. This motivated a huge discussion in the short term, but in the long term the strategy was incredibly harmful, for when the fantastical scenarios failed to actualize, the "doomsdayer nitwit" stereotype became even more entrenched than before.

But population is a problem, and it is directly implicated in nearly every major environmental problem. The same goes for a subset of the population problem, namely, immigration. Still, I do not think that wildists should attempt to address the population problem.

First, any attempt to manage population will require technical infrastructure that we clearly don't want to preserve.

Second, other attempts to deal with the population problem that do not require technical management would amount to mass murder. And not only would that be completely and utterly unethical, it would also hold people directly responsible for issues that they probably have only a marginal importance in creating. Although the relationship between demography and technical development is complex, a third world family with many children is clearly less of an issue than a technician helping develop agricultural techniques with biotechnology.

Third, although, again, the relationship between population and technology is not a one-to-one relationship, technology is the only way a land's carrying capacity can be improved, so it greatly exacerbates the population problem. Addressing the technology problem, then, is sufficient.

But even if we only focus on the technology problem, there is an argument against collapse that goes like this: If technology is the only thing capable of sustaining such a large population, then by arguing for the collapse of that technology, you are also arguing for the deaths of billions of people.

Though there are some problems with the argument, for the most part it offers one of the strongest challenges to wildist politics, if it is not *the* strongest challenge. In fact, of the various arguments considered here, only three stand out to me as worth putting a great deal of thought into: the problem of technologies mentioned above, the reality of human fallibility (see section VII.C), and this problem of population. And though I will attempt to address the problem by situating it in real-life circumstances, a little voice in the back of my mind always suggests that I am merely covering up a rather simple problem with layers of unnecessary complexity—like the postmodernists do when they "complexify reductionist science." Still, I think there are some important caveats to the simple equation of "human population minus technology equals mass death," and only after they have been considered can we regard it a good faith argument.

First, conservationists are not alone in being at a loss regarding the problem of population. Studies in moral psychology indicate that every living human has trouble moralizing about large populations of people—perhaps even an inability to. As Churchland (2011) put it, "no one has the slightest idea how to compare the mild headache of five million against the broken legs of two, or the needs of one's own two children against the needs of a hundred unrelated brain-damaged children in Serbia."

The psychologist Paul Slovic (2007) has a famous experiment in this area of population ethics in which he told volunteers about a starving girl, measured their willingness to donate, and then told the same story to another group but with the added detail that millions of others were also starving. The second group gave around half as much money as the first. In fact, Slovic found that even adding just one more person would begin that process of "psychic numbing."

How, then, have we overcome or attempted to overcome this process in the past? A good place to look is the history and ethics of war, to which the above findings are obviously relevant. Ethics of war is also particularly relevant to wildist politics because a revolution is essentially an act of war: it is a collective act of violence meant to force a political goal, and historically, even in the so-called "peaceful revolutions," revolution has resulted in the death of many people.

Unfortunately, the ethics of war is a field in tumult (McMahan, 2012). The dominant responses are pacifism—an obviously unworkable response, and an especially civilized one—and "just war theory," but not only has the latter been challenged in significant ways, it is facing many problems with the asymmetric dynamics of warfare instigated by new technical innovations, dynamics that wildists will clearly have to operate under. Furthermore, it is a largely Christian philosophy, so it is not applicable to wildism insofar as it has a progressivist bias. But perhaps we can at least salvage some thinking that has been done on particular issues.

For instance, warfare is traditionally conceived as a conflict between two classes of actors. In the wildist case, the war would primarily be between industrial technology and conservationists, which necessarily implicates technicians, states, and other actors involved in sustaining or protecting technical development. But in warfare, even if there are two primary classes in conflict, those uninterested or uninvolved in the conflict will necessarily pay a price. Traditionally this class is usually composed of civilians. In the wildist case, the question of population falls under a similar ethical banner.

Some of the provisions in a just war include the need for a clear goal, some kind of public declaration, the need to maintain a proportional response to the threat, and the general imperative to only attack those defined as combatants. Wildists clearly fulfill two of the requirements: their defined goal is the disruption of industrial society beyond repair; and they have publicly announced the beginnings of anti-industrial reaction. The question of proportionality is still pressing, and particularly difficult given the above findings in moral psychology, and the divide between "combatants" and "non-combatants" is obscured by both the particulars of the wildist ideology and the even more relevant turmoil caused by new technical conditions. In fact, the divide is one of the most pressing questions in the ethics of war today: whereas only about 10%-15% of those who died at the beginning of the twentieth century were civilians, about 50% of the deaths in WWII were civilians, and by the end of 2000 about 75% were (See, In an ethical war, whom can you fight?).

One way to address both of these questions has been the "doctrine of double effect," which states that so long as the object of attack is a legitimate one, non-combatant casualties are or can be considered justified. For instance, bombing an enemy military base is justified even if it means some civilians in surrounding areas suffer or die. There have been some challenges to the doctrine of double effect, and I do not necessarily suggest it, but there are few alternatives, and this speaks to the complexity of the issue before it speaks to the blanket immorality of it.

Two other issues must be considered. First, wildist morality is different from the various progressivist moralities, whether they be humanist, Christian, or nationalist ones. In particular, wildists place importance on the concept of *relations*, which is in some ways akin to the moral hierarchy set up by nationalist ethics, or the idea that protecting national citizens is more important than protecting civilians in other nations. Furthermore, discussions of proportionality will undoubtedly lead to different conclusions if the people discussing them are humanists rather than wildists.

Secondly, wildists will neither have enough power to carry out their reaction alone nor will they see events from a big-picture perspective, bound as they are to their own points of view. This is related to the difference noted above between a revolutionary politic and a terroristic one. Perhaps the critique being considered would be more relevant if terroristic strategies worked (which is a different question than whether terroristic *tactics* work). If wildists could as a definitive group carry out the actions necessary to disrupt industrial society beyond repair, then there is some argument that they would be directly responsible for the consequences. But wildists, embarking on an anti-industrial reaction, that is, a revolutionary effort, will have a more indirect impact, and their effort necessarily derives power from others. This is a good thing, since it is a hard practical limit on the amount of damage any one misguided individual or group could do. But it also means that in the context of on-the-ground action, there will be no one-to-one correlation between specific actions and their effects.

Now that all of that has been said, I must admit that I cannot properly respond to the problem of population, and I sincerely doubt that anyone, wildists and non-wildists alike, will be able to fare much better. In fact, a common response to our problems from the technician class is space travel. Outlandish as it sounds, astronomers like Martin Rees (2003), capitalists like Elon Musk (Anderson), and many others have strongly encouraged developing space travel technologies because they will allow the progressive project to continue if we screw up our time here on earth. But let that sink in. How many people do you think will make it onto those space ships?

Still, even though no response will be adequate, I consider a proper treatment of the ethics of revolution to be a pressing concern for wildists. This is such a comprehensive topic that another essay would be required, and,

worry not, it is coming. For now, though, some ground rules are fairly obvious.

First, indiscriminate violence is morally abhorrent, unnecessary, and, even apart from all that, strategically unsound. People—correctly—would not support a revolutionary effort that shows no concern for them. As a result, all wildist efforts should be specific and targeted, and in all possible cases should incite tension between the populace and industry or its protectors rather than the populace and conservationists.

Second, I again accent the importance of proper interaction with the tactical spectrum. Wildist efforts should primarily be concerned with building, linking, and radicalizing the spectrum. Although some direct involvement with monkeywrenching is logically necessary for some factions, the public face of the party should focus its effort on strengthening the bonds between moderate and radical elements, calling attention to the conditions of technical domination, and other such things.

Third, wildists are not trying to solve the problem of population; they are responding to the problem of industrial technology. This should incessantly be made clear.

Fourth, wildists should be required to give thoughtful attention to the problems noted here. Once again, the core ethical concern for wild nature should be primary, and emphasis should be placed on strict separation from those who just want to see the world burn. This is especially important given the disillusionment of various excluded classes and the pseudo-politic of many in those classes often expressing itself in the slogan "fuck everything." "Civilization" is a term all-encompassing enough to take the place of "everything" in that slogan. Of course, these disillusioned elements are an important part of a revolution, but by no means should define it, and certainly should not be a part of party leadership.

C. Hospitals and Medicine

Medicine is the end-all, be-all argument of industrial society. I deal with this extensively in "The Foundations of Wildist Ethics," where I argue that while the normative science of wildists is conservation, the normative science of humanists is clearly the modern field of medicine. Whereas conservation concerns itself with nature and wildness, medicine concerns itself with health and well-being. In certain formulations these medical concerns are an ineradicable and necessary part of the human condition: we humans are concerned with those we love and are of course concerned with our survival, so we hope to mitigate the troubles inflaming those concerns or even to annihilate the obstacles inherent in our existence by healing our sick. The problem, then, isn't medicine per se.

But modern medicine and civilized medicine more broadly has gone beyond this base concern, and pervasive in its ethics journals and its practice is the idea of progress—of *improving* human well-being by modifying nature accordingly. For instance, the editor for the *Journal of Medical Ethics*, when asked about designer babies, has said he supports it because we have a moral obligation to create "ethically better children" (Alleyne, 2012).

Indeed, in the realm of ideas, the great test of the conservationist challenge is whether or not it can successfully pave the way for its challenge to modern industrial medicine. Biotechnology is argued for on the basis that it improves human well-being, and for the great advances it will offer to medicine and agriculture. In fact, with the deterioration of soil caused by industrial agriculture, biotechnology is about the only viable civilized solution; and with the advent of anti-microbial resistance, biotechnology will be the only thing to save practical medicine. Industry as a whole has greatly improved human ability to fight disease (DeBold & Friedman, 2015) and undoubtedly the collapse of industry will return to many people's daily life the constant fight with disease that pre-industrial peoples, though to a lesser extent primitive peoples, faced.

But more than any other argument employed by polemicists for industry, industrial medicine embodies the core reasons for conservationist revolt. One reason is obviously its progressivism. But its internal logic is also the same.

Consider, for instance, the fact that most diseases are exacerbated by civilization. As one article put it, "…a developing model of infectious diseases—AIDS, Ebola, West Nile, SARS, Lyme disease—[reveals that they] don't just happen. They are a result of things people do to nature." It goes on to explain, "Sixty percent of emerging infectious diseases that affect humans are zoonotic—they originate in animals. And more than two-thirds of those originate in wildlife" (Robbins, 2012). The famed science and nature writer David Quammen (2014; 2012) released a book about the very issue not too long ago entitled *Spillover*, a follow up of some of the same issues brought up in his book on Ebola. In fact, the ideas are gaining so much steam that a revisionist faction of the movement has formed called conservation medicine, which is, as is to be expected, more medicine than conservation.

And this is not just relevant to industrial civilization. The onset of agriculture, for instance, brought massive waves of disease that only later began to be quelled

through management, cities, states, and so forth—quelled, that is, by civilization (Diamond, 1999). This isn't to say that primitive peoples did not suffer from diseases, but civilization did make things worse, and doesn't suffer from the consequences of its actions only because of a constant fight against the microbial barbarian hordes smashing against its walls. Quammen (1981), again, explains the consequences of civilized practices without these walls:

> *Clear the vegetation from the brink of a jungle waterhole, move in with tents and cattle and Jeeps, and the* Anopheles gambiae*, not normally native there, will arrive within a month, bringing malaria. Cut the tall timber from five acres of rainforest, and species of infectious* Aedes*—which would otherwise live out their lives in the high forest canopy, passing yellow fever between monkeys—will literally fall on you, and begin biting before your chainsaw has cooled. Nurturing not only more species of snake and bird than anywhere on earth, but also more forms of disease-causing microbe, and more mosquitoes to carry them, tropical forests are elaborately booby-trapped against disruption.*
>
> *The native forests peoples gradually acquired some immunity to these diseases, and their nondisruptive hunting-and-gathering economies minimized their exposure to mosquitoes that favored the canopy or disturbed ground. Meanwhile the occasional white interlopers, the agents of empire, remained vulnerable. West Africa in high colonial days became known as "the white man's grave."*

In fact, most hunter/gatherers are neither struck by degenerative disorders or diseases to the degree industrial humans are, nor are they struck by many now-prominent mental health issues. One article explains, "There is increasing evidence that the resulting mismatch fosters 'diseases of civilization' that together cause 75 percent of all deaths in Western nations, but that are rare among persons whose lifeways reflect those of our preagricultural ancestors" (Eaton, Konner, & Shostak, 1988).

But of course this is not sufficient as a challenge to industry. As the field of conservation medicine has shown, merely pointing out that civilization exacerbates the problem of disease will only motivate progressivists to improve civilization. Instead, the process of progress itself has to be delegitimized.

I explain, for instance, in "The Foundations of Wildist Ethics" that because artificial intervention of natural processes through civilized technics is so greatly misaligned with those natural processes, civilized institutions and management schemes must then "fill in the gaps" to preserve its edifices. This is why, left to its own devices, artifice crumbles, and why civilized institutions like the police, surveillance systems, and industrial medicine are *necessary* to preserve the civilized way of life. I give the humorous example of pooping: a hunter/gatherer poops and it is dealt with naturally; a toilet, however, requires division of labor, infrastructure, police forces to protect that infrastructure at a certain level of complexity, etc. A civilization is this process magnified a thousandfold.

The most potent challenge to this is the value of wildness. For instance, in the case of human health, civilized institutions cause problems that through progress can only be quelled through artificial means: further modification of human bodies, the creation of artificial desires, etc. Of course, "artifice" does not make one impure, and no person would suggest the ridiculous idea that things need be totally natural. But if the *domination* of artifice is called into question and value is placed on less human and technical control, or more wildness, then no civilized solution can be proposed and maintain itself as legitimate.

Note the distinction between this approach and the one of many other anti-industrialists. The latter group sometimes explains that the same process of progress is what has historically lead to collapse, since, as Tainter points out, at some point the artificial energy required to maintain civilized institutions reaches the point of diminishing returns. Because civilization is nothing but a big bubble of artifice, when it pops all the consequences from which it is able to shield its constituents when it is strong come flooding in. Thus, in the case of disease we may be solving some problems now, but we court larger disaster later, as many have pointed out may be the case with anti-microbial resistance (World Health Organization, 2014).

Of course this is true, and it should be pointed out. But because it doesn't get to the actual root of the problem (i.e., progress) it is susceptible to being derailed by discussions like whether or not collapse is inevitable, for if it is not then we need not worry about the bubble popping. Instead, in discussions about medical technology, we should challenge the most precious values used to justify it, and we should not argue that medicine will or may, in the long run, betray its own values. Those aren't our values anyway.

D. Human Nature

As with the case of the negative consequences related to the collapse of industrial medicine, the negative consequences related to freed human nature are, rather than being a challenge to collapse, an exercise in coming to terms with the wildist morality and its own challenge to progressivism.

These negative (or "negative") aspects of human nature are indeed a challenge to our current way of thinking. These include an astounding level of violence, infanticide, prejudice and xenophobia, cannibalism, natural propensities toward psychopathy and criminal behavior (in some), and sexual dynamics out of line with in vogue feminist politics.

I have for the most part addressed these concerns already in "The Foundations of Wildist Ethics," pp. 38-40. I strongly recommend that readers grab the first issue of *Hunter/Gatherer* and check it out. I wish only to remind skeptics that wildists do not wish to enforce a vision of human nature—such a thing would contradict the essence of our politics. Rather, the idea is that scientific investigation, particularly through sociobiology, has revealed and is revealing what human behaviors will flourish when the artificial restraints are loosened, the shackles of industry broken. It is akin to an ecosystem rebounding when industrial impact is lessened. Of course this means pretty things like, in some ecosystems, greenery and perhaps some cute animals. But it also means things that will eat you and being more naked before the power of natural disasters. The same can be expected for human nature: when it is allowed to flourish, we will see both cooperation and violence, the fluffy creatures and the vicious bears. The whole point of wildism is coming to terms with this complex reality that inspires awe, love, and ambivalence alike. Perhaps, we even say, the bears of human nature are needed.

VII. Alleged Discrepancies

A. Determinism, Free Will, and Radical Politics

> *It was said long ago that politics is the art of the possible. That does not suppress our initiative: since we do not know the future, we have only, after carefully weighing everything, to push in our direction. But that reminds us of the gravity of politics; it obliges us, instead of simply forcing our will, to take a look hard among the facts for the shape they should take.*
>
> *—Merleau-Ponty*

Some claim that the wildist politic betrays its commitment to determinist materialism. I've already partially dealt with this problem in "Foundations," pp. 10-11, but some things ought to be said specifically in relation to an anti-industrial reaction.

First, if determinism invalidates a radical political effort, it invalidates doing anything. The argument is well-known in philosophy as "the lazy argument." But any such argument creates several paradoxes. For instance, perhaps it was determined for you to become lazy, or perhaps your actions are part of the chain of causality that will create the world you want to see—which is perhaps why you even want to see that world.

These paradoxes are part of the reason I tentatively espouse a compatibilist notion of free will and regard disposing of the free will concept as irresponsible. At least as long as we are humans unmodified by technics, free will must remain with us. We can't truly get rid of it anyway, and even if we could we would be getting rid of a motivator and even a rational tool that has no better replacement.

Second, "free will" as such can, in fact, be a rational tool. To a large degree, humans feel motivated to embark on certain actions because they believe them to be possible, and, in contrast to the lazy argument, are likely to embark on them even, and perhaps especially, when they are inevitable. Note that the communists, for instance, argued for revolution even though Marx believed the transition from agrarian to capitalist to communist societies to be an inevitable process. And we've all heard our friends resist investing in a project because they believed it to be impossible. Free will, then, and its collective incarnation as political effort, can properly be conceived of as a "prediction of what is inevitable."

We noted in section V.A that collapse is almost certainly inevitable in the long-term and likely inevitable in the short term (that is, before the end of the next century). We also know from history that many collapses or revolutions were due at least partially to human behavior, especially those of the revolutionaries. World War I, for instance, was ignited by a single assassination (even if the surrounding conditions provided the kindling). Thus, the wildist argument for an anti-industrial reaction can be seen as a prediction that a revolutionary effort plus a convergence of external, non-human forces will lead to collapse.

That said, I do not advocate rhetoric of inevitability. The lazy argument still sometimes holds sway, and I do not want people to avoid engaging in a reaction because

they will believe it will happen without them. This is because, among other reasons, there is still some chance that determinism is wrong. And in any case, such rhetoric would turn discussions into an endless argument about unknowable empirical facts when discussion of morality is far more relevant. Again, the problem with the former (the facts are unknowable) is the exact reason we have the useful fiction of free will. It is best to focus on what kind of world is desirable and whether some movement toward that world is possible.

This is even truer when we consider that, even if it were shown that the conquest of industry is inevitable, I (and surely some others) do not know if I could engage with it in a normal way. Of course, my interaction would be different than it is now, and I'm not sure if any movement would be possible in those circumstances. But because I so thoroughly disdain industry's destruction of wild nature, and because I so thoroughly love the wilderness, I cannot see myself ever espousing the world that is, simply because its victory is inevitable. I would, in other words, feel compelled to fight a losing fight, especially when the alternative would be so wretched. Perhaps this is my fate, and I am open to the likely possibility that many others do not share my convictions. But as it stands, I cannot find inevitability to be as relevant to the discussion as morality, and will continue to base my political endeavors primarily on what I feel I ought to do rather than what I think will be.

B. The Charge of Progressivism

Another "betrayal of your own beliefs" argument against wildism seems particularly strong, pointing out that wildists are incredibly critical of abstract blueprints, yet fail to apply the same critique to their reactionary program. Therefore, wildists are actually progressive.

This argument has several problems. First, it misunderstands the technical meaning of "progressivism," which when completely distilled is only a normative claim that civilized modification of nature is good. Of course, there are associated beliefs that grant power to this claim, but most of them have fallen by the wayside. Still, the twenty-first century version of the mythology remains legitimate in many people's eyes because one associated belief has *not* fallen by the wayside: the belief that humans can control the direction of progress.

A huge part of the wildist critique of progress consists of debunking this associated belief. No individual or group directs technical development (the backbone of civilizational development) nor can they. Furthermore, any effort to implement abstract blueprints on a society will inevitably fail. One can't dream up a society on paper and then try to make it work in the real world successfully. The arguments supporting these conclusions can be found in "Foundations," pp. 22-27.

They don't really apply to the idea of an anti-industrial reaction. For one thing, disrupting industry beyond repair is not equivalent to dreaming up the particulars of a society and then trying to make them so, as communists do, for instance. For another, the wildist reaction doesn't require maintaining control over nature, and is indeed the complete opposite. In other words, the critique of progress would only apply if we were trying to force everyone to be hunter/gatherers.

But the reason the critique of progress is true is because humans don't understand nature, "the world not made or controlled by them or their technical systems," to any degree necessary to direct progress, and they are not nearly powerful enough to do so in the context of a complex system like a society, which is far more susceptible to infrastructural factors like geography and demography. For instance, the reason industrial medicine qualifies as progress is because it requires a constant fight against disease, a battle that we have to always modify because the other side is always changing. This is why we are now taken aback by the problem of anti-microbial resistance. Of course, progress, the civilized modification of nature, still happens, but it is not wholly or even to a large degree controlled by human reason.

Still, some reasons why this is so *do* apply to the wildist political effort, but rather than not applying those realities to our reaction, we've given them a great deal of thought. For instance, we recognize that a small group attempting to make a definable large change will ultimately only achieve that change because of added factors that are outside of their control. Thus, we must pay attention to economics and technical innovations and a host of other fields. We must also look closely at historical revolutionary or radical political efforts to see what circumstances led to change, so that we can try to discern general principles that seem to apply to each of them. None of this comes with the hubristic or ignorant assumption that we have the power to achieve what we want alone.

C. The Threat of Human Folly

Back when I was running *The Wildernist*, a student conservation magazine, I had the privilege of publishing an interview between Professor David Skrbina, who teaches a philosophy of technology class at the University of Michigan, and Dave Foreman, one of the founders of Earth First! In it, Foreman, an avid anti-industrialist with

beliefs very similar to wildists, explained why he didn't support revolution. It's worth quoting a large excerpt here:

> ***Foreman****: My fear is that revolutionaries nearly always become that which they revolt against. It doesn't turn out that good. I have a low opinion of human beings. I don't think they are capable of revolution. I think the most successful revolution that was really limited in scope was the American revolution, but even it has been fairly subverted by corporations and that type of thing.*
>
> ***Skrbina****: Ok, but the technological system is different. You're not trying to take power, you simply want to bring it crashing down. And then whoever survives will continue again as hunter-gatherers.*
>
> ***Foreman****: The thing I see is that nobody "revolted" against the Soviet system, but it collapsed because of its own internal contradictions. In many ways, the Soviet and western systems are based on industrialism and exploitation, and so it is just that the Soviets were more inefficient and incompetent, so they crashed first.*
>
> ***Skrbina****: Is it fair to say you would support industrial collapse? Would you see that as a possible outcome?*
>
> ***Foreman****: I think industrial collapse is going to happen. In the long term it is a positive thing. And then since it is inevitable, it is probably better for it to happen sooner rather than later.*
>
> ***Skrbina****: So shouldn't you take some proactive action, to help it happen sooner rather than later?*
>
> ***Foreman****: If you try to do that, might you not mess things up? I just don't trust us to be able to adequately do it. My misanthropy—my atheistic Calvinism—prevents me from thinking that any group of people, no matter how well meaning, how intelligent, how ethical, are capable of solving these overwhelming institutional problems of mass civilization.*
>
> ***Skrbina****: So you're saying that the task is simply beyond our ability, and therefore we should not focus on it because we have no practical possibility of being an effective contributor to that—is that basically it? Instead we should focus on…what?*
>
> ***Foreman****: My point is the system is going to come down, one way or another way, on its own. My task is keeping all the building blocks of future evolution that we can.*

Apart from the population question, Foreman's critique is the only one that gets me questioning this whole business of revolution. In fact, I whole-heartedly agree with his assessment that the American Revolution was the only one deserving of at least some praise, and my politics are deeply affected by the ideas that spurred it on. And as should be clear to anyone who has read both the *Federalist Papers* and my own writings, I have tried to integrate much of their wisdom into my political endeavors.

By far the most important piece of wisdom is the American revolutionaries' intense awareness of human nature, particularly the bad parts of it. Unfortunately, talk of human nature has gone out of vogue, so you don't see much of it in the political sphere anymore, but thankfully some of the more thoughtful wings of the conservative movement have brought it to the fore again, the Darwinian factions integrating recent findings in sociobiology, like wildists do. Regardless, ideas about human nature are important because, as Horowitz (2010) put it, "At the core of every political theory of a comprehensive character there is a theory of human nature."

Because of the American revolutionaries' willingness to recognize human folly, they produced men such as John Adams, who believed that both Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton were unfit to be politicians because their souls were so poisoned with ambition. Known for his cantankerousness and his biting insults, he specifically said about Hamilton that his projects "all arose from a superabundance of secretions which he could not find whores enough to draw off!" Perhaps not coincidentally, I can think of at least two individuals closely associated with The Wildist Institute who could easily be incarnations of Adam's difficult personality. And good thing, too.

The ideas floating around during the American Revolution also produced some of the most ingenious political innovations yet to show up, including the system of checks and balances, the US Constitution and the whole system for modifying it, and, at least in its original form, a federalist method of unifying states with widely diverging interests. Comparable are the wildist ideas of hard material limits on human technical endeavors. For instance, the whole reason our political project aims to end the industrial system is because, rather than placing naïve

faith in human capacity for self-restraint, it puts a hard limit on the damage to wild nature actually possible. It is for a similar reason that we advocate the hunter/gatherer way of life as a moral ideal.

I also think constantly about the possible repercussions of revolution. In fact, my name, John Jacobi, comes from this very contemplation. When I was active in anarchist politics, I followed the normal convention of using a pseudonym, at least around my political associates. At first, being young, I was not too concerned with the implications of radical political efforts, and I picked a rather innocuous name with no deep meaning. I was also very much the same flippant person I warned against earlier—calling for revolution without truly knowing what it meant, espousing a pseudo-politic that was more about lashing out at a world I knew was at the root of my unease, but fundamentally ignorant about why, exactly, that was. But halfway through my time with the anarchists, I became more politically astute, or at least became aware again of the political astuteness I had lost in my juvenile fervor. I read about life in places shaken with political turmoil, watched films about revolutionary efforts gone wrong, cried late at night while reading memoirs of a young revolutionist who recounted some terrible acts she had committed in the heat of a revolutionary effort.

Out of this study, the French Revolution always stood out to me as particularly wretched. The Jacobins, the Terror, the young flippant man named Robespierre. So I changed my name to Jacobi, avoiding the fuller Jacobin both because it didn't sound as nice and because a radical communist magazine by the same name had begun to pick up steam, and I didn't want to be associated with them. Still, it was close enough, and even now when I get asked about my name I am forced to reconcile my political imperative for revolution with the very real possibility that it might go wrong. Constantly I have to ask myself if the potential consequences are worth the risk.

As it stands, I believe they are. Recall earlier that people believe and are motivated by the silliest ideologies—talk of icemen or Thetans or parting the Red Sea. And with the growing numbers of excluded and bored classes, surely such an ideology could easily ignite their passions and bring about political turmoil. I've always contended that that part of revolution was the easiest anyway. Yet here I stand in the company of several others who place importance on *truth*, *prudence*, and *thoughtful radicalism*. The culture is one concerned with actually dealing with the issues and addressing them in such a way that would not betray our own moral compasses, even if this means a slower start and even, potentially, a less effective end. Should this culture change at any point, I would not hesitate to leave, but at least so long as it is maintained, I do have a tentative faith that revolution is possible without too terrible an outcome.

Still, I am aware that even the most guarded effort is either doomed to fail or must let down its guard a bit for a chance at success. And I am aware that even the most self-restrained person now could easily become a tyrant later. Here I sympathize with Foreman and his skepticism of revolution.

I nevertheless engage in my current political efforts because they seem better than the alternatives. As I've said before, choosing to do nothing about the continued development of the industrial technical apparatus is, in fact, a choice, and the possible futures I see for an unchallenged technical system are far worse than those I can imagine in one where it at least faces major obstacles on its path toward "progress." My only real response, then, is to again encourage thoughtfulness on the part of the reactionary. Think about your actions, determine for yourself if you think the effort is worth it, and do not ever exclude your own evil tendencies from your critique.

D. The Charge of Humanism

Another argument suggesting that wildism betrays its own values says that revolution is a political imperative created only by humanist ethics and a concern for all of humanity. I assume that the suggested alternatives, which ostensibly care more for the individual and his relations, are along the lines of escape into the forest or small-group action. For example, the anarcho-primitivist Kevin Tucker argues that revolution is a civilized project and that anarcho-primitivists must engage in "primal war," which is revolt similar to the kind indigenous people engaged in during the colonial era.

Of course, the suggested alternatives are impotent. Tucker, for instance, has no substantial argument against revolution, and there's a reason all the indigenous efforts failed. Furthermore, he seems to advocate a terroristic strategy against industrial society, thinking that individuals are super-empowered enough that small-scale revolt would be sufficient to lead directly to the collapse of industrial society. In particular, he has advocated attacking the electric grid in his anarchist zine, *Species Traitor*. However, we have already reviewed the weaknesses of the terroristic strategy, even apart from the inherent moral problems. Furthermore, even if the strategy were hypothetically feasible, the possibility of failure would come at too great a price. If some of his anarcho-primitivist followers decided to engage in this "primal war" and failed,

this would amount to nothing in terms of damage to industry and would greatly exacerbate the tension between the public and anti-industrialists. It could even elicit a crackdown that decimates the movement. Of course, anarchists have a tendency to make this mistake, as is apparent from the history of their movement in the early nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the precursor for modern terrorism.

And anyway, to call for revolution does not come out of a concern for all of humanity (or, rather, *equal* ethical concern for all of humanity). As I point out in "Relations and the Moral Circle," it is perfectly possible to justify large-scale action on the basis of simple logical reasoning: I and my relations are affected; he and his relations are affected; they and their relations are affected; therefore, we form a broad-based coalition for more effective political action. Of course, this is an abstracted dynamic, for not everyone revolts on the basis of a revolutionary ideology, even many who profess to.

In reality, revolt has widely diverging causes, three of which I'll note here. First, individuals who belong to an excluded class become dissatisfied with their condition and revolt under the name of the revolutionary ideology because it provides a means of justification for their unrest and an explanation for their discontent. It does not matter whether or not changing circumstance, such as more comfortable conditions, would change their dissatisfaction, because they do not have access to those conditions anyway. This is why the promise of changing conditions (such as the idea of the American Dream) or quelled conditions (such as through sports or video games) must be attacked wherever it is untrue, so that the oppressed classes feel their own oppression. Although, as Hoffer (2011) points out, there is a delicate balance to consider, since if oppressed classes feel too downtrodden they will fail to revolt. They must therefore be aware of their unease and their inability to quell it but they cannot feel doomed.

Second, there is the member of an excluded class who may have a chance to escape into the elite position, but for whatever reason has a profound distaste for the elite way of life, its ideology, its domination. This individual revolts because of an actual belief in the revolutionary ideology and his moral conviction that the prevailing society is an illegitimate one. For instance, I am one of these individuals, capable as I am of rising from my early poverty in Alabama, given the opportunity to use college as a spring board, but unable to find the wherewithal to wade through the sludge of unethical and dreary conditions that define modern life.

Third, there are the select few of the elite classes who are born into the better of social conditions but who find themselves dissatisfied. Often this is from boredom, at least as useful as oppression in motivating political action, and arguably more, but sometimes and crucially an elite revolutionary truly believes in the cause. Like the excluded rebel who feels revulsion at bourgeois manners, this individual cannot find satisfaction in an empty life and aids the effort "from above." These elites are in many cases the reason revolutionary efforts succeed.

Thus, rather than being a holy humanist cause, a revolution is a convergence of interests that strike upon a particular historical moment properly captured and channeled by a revolutionary ideology. These interests are disparate and may in many cases have nothing to do with the ideology itself. What is important is that the prevailing ideas direct political effort toward a defined target in a manner that will bring about a fundamental change in the society in question. This has been the true character of every revolution.

E. Duping the Masses?

> *The only truly serious attitude—serious because the danger of man's destruction by propaganda is serious, serious because no other attitude is truly responsible and serious—is to show people the extreme effectiveness of the weapon used against them, to rouse them to defend themselves by making them aware of their frailty and their vulnerability, instead of soothing them with the worst illusion, that of a security that neither man's nature nor the techniques of propaganda permit him to possess. It is merely convenient to realize that the side of freedom and truth for man has not yet lost, but that it may well lose—and that in this game, propaganda is undoubtedly the most formidable power, acting only in one direction (toward the destruction of truth and freedom), no matter what the good intentions or the good will may be of those who manipulate it.*
>
> —Propaganda, *Jacques Ellul*

When first flirting with the idea of an anti-industrial reaction, I heard a handful of critiques incessantly, but one that came up nearly always from other conservationists and anti-industrialists was that a revolution necessarily entails the nasty aspects of politics we, it is presumed, oppose; that it necessarily involves lying to the masses to lead them or, rather, to exert power over them.

There are obviously some problems with this criticism. For one thing, as I've relentlessly made clear, wildists must make truth primary. There is a political imperative for this even apart from an *a priori* commitment that I am unwilling to let go of: when attempting to attain political goals, the truth is nearly always a better starting position. From there it is feasible that you may deceive, but at the very least it would make little sense to be espousing untruths in this text or any of the other public texts explaining wildism, since they elucidate the ideology at the core of wildist efforts. Once again, I do not wish to be duped by others, but just as important, I do not wish to be duped by myself.

Nevertheless, it is feasible and probably necessary to some extent to engage in untruths for the political goal itself. That is, wildists do not hope to spread an ideology and their goal is not to enlighten, except insofar as that task helps further the larger goal, which is, of course, disrupting industrial society beyond repair. And it is not necessary for all elements contributing to this effort to know what they are doing or why they are doing it. In fact, it is perfectly possible for completely ignorant elements to contribute greatly.

To a degree I do not think this is a problem, or at least it is an inescapable reality. No man achieved anything by requiring anyone who engaged with him to be fully enlightened before undertaking action. It is also simply impossible to live in such a way. I am reminded of the extreme pacifists who regard walking on plants as a kind of violence, killing bugs a kind of murder. This approach to reality is anathema to wildism since it is disdainful of nature. Instead of imposing our abstract blueprints, then, we should situate ourselves fully in our material condition and proceed realistically from there. And realistically, some men are duller than others.

That said, the goal is not to spread ignorance either, and where possible the truth should be favored. This should, so far as I can see, include the majority of our political work. Lies are not only morally questionable in many circumstances; they are also unsustainable politically, and only beneficial when it comes to short term gains and the willingness to burn bridges or forsake the possibility of a future ally.

Furthermore, as Ellul points out in the quote initiating this section, one of the most effective tools in the hands of wildists is spreading truth and making men aware of their condition. For instance, I have found that many individuals are not concerned with biotechnology until they are reminded that the same technics designing baby faces can design baby minds. Only then do they become aware of its implications, and perhaps even motivated to do something about it.

And since the wildist political effort aims at restoring the wildness of nature, this means that obscurity and false doctrine would in the long run hurt the cause. Consider the work of Martin Seligman (Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978). The psychologist once ran experiments on what he called "learned helplessness," placing rats and dogs in various conditions, some of which they were able to escape, some of which were beyond their control. Over time, those in the latter group would develop symptoms similar to depression and despair in human beings, and they would eventually give up attempting to change their situation, even when placed again in a situation that they could easily—and demonstrably—escape. The only way to take the animals out of the stupor was to repeatedly show them that it was again in their ability to have power over their conditions. But without the outside help, they would have continued to wallow in their despair.

Many people do not believe revolution is possible, and a surprising number of people feel quite powerless to change anything. They do not vote, they respond to political problems only with irony and cynicism, and they avoid any earnest commitments as though it was their religious duty. And of course this is somewhat justified, for industrial man does not have much power over his life. But he certainly has more power than he thinks, and in a time of turmoil he will have much more than that. In those times we must be Seligman, demonstrating to those who have learned to be helpless that they need not be helpless any longer.

At one point in his text on propaganda, Ellul echoes the findings of Seligman, speaking of the man who suddenly finds the propaganda machine around him crumble or for whatever reason lose its stronghold over him. "[A] terrible silence…suddenly surrounds him," Ellul writes, "he who permitted himself to be led, no longer knows where to go; and all around him he hears the violent clamor of other propagandas seeking to influence him…" Ellul then goes on to explain that the individual who loses propaganda that had since provided him such security will become "plunged into apathy [without any] way of getting out of it." As a result, he either becomes absorbed into other propagandas which provide new security, or he "acquires a conviction of his [own] trustworthiness much more violent than before because for a while he has believed in his worth."

There is, of course, the possibility that wildism will find itself becoming an alternative propaganda, at least

more than it enlightens man to become as Jacob, wrestling with his stark material condition. In fact, that will almost certainly happen. But by ending the technical apparatus the very method of domination enabled by it becomes impossible, so I again find myself unbothered by this dynamic as a reality, seeing the critique instead a useful reminder to, as I mentioned before, remain aware of the potential terribleness of revolution, and to guard against it where possible.

That said, Ellul and many who agree with his critique argue that "technique" and "propaganda" can go "only in one direction." But I think it is clear that this is untrue, and if taken seriously it reduces one to impotence just as surely as that absurd maxim, "you can't use the master's tools to take down the master's house." This is especially absurd when that is, in fact, exactly how you would take down the master's house. Of course, Ellul himself came to this politically impotent conclusion. He was a pacifist and a Christian, so still a progressivist, and seemed uncomfortable with certain facts of reality, disdainful of them even. So he ended up advocating a non-violent revolution that he regarded as primarily spiritual, and he admitted himself that he thought it to be impossible. I suppose that if someone actually does see truth in Ellul's point of view, then he is justified into joining the man in such a conclusion. But as someone who does not see that truth, it seems a very sad thing.

VIII. A Sketch of the Wild Reaction

> *Undoubtedly, if modern tendencies have any elements of permanency in them, a great deal of the activity of the future will be devoted to the end of a greater understanding of the universe. Humanity, or its descendants, may well be much more occupied with purely scientific research and much less with the necessity of satisfying primarily physiological and psychological needs than it is at present. This character may stamp the whole of future development, so that machinery will be organized not for production but for discovery. Indeed, the great necessity for production either of food or other articles of consumption will disappear rapidly with the progress of dehumanization... [But] we shall have very sane reactionaries at all periods warning us to remain in the natural and primitive state of humanity...*
>
> —The World, the Flesh, and the Devil, *J.D. Bernal*

The counter-arguments rebutted, it is time to now demonstrate tangibly what the wildist reaction might be. A more thorough treatment is due another time, but a sketch should be sufficient for now.

Absolutely our first step should be forming a party accepting any wildness-centered conservationists as members. This party would be a revolutionary one, and while its end goal, the disruption of industry beyond repair, should be explicit, its immediate goal should be accepting the role as the conscience of conservation. Time and time again I have written about two threats: the revisionists and the progressivists. The latter are no threat to conservation per se, but the former are a great one, and as time goes by their perversions threaten to break apart, distract, and altogether weaken the movement. Party members must work to delegitimize them in conservation organizations and other periphery groups, and they must do so through action more than words: accepting positions of leadership, positioning the narrative of wildness in front of the cameras when they are present, and so forth. Of course, our fight is not with the revisionists except insofar as this is a necessary step toward the reaction, so they should not be fought just because. Thus, so long as a wildness-centered core is preserved and strong, they should simply be ignored.

Otherwise, the party's work is linking and building the tactical spectrum. Radicalizing will come later, since we first must make our case for revolution and spread it among periphery groups. The work cannot be one of an outsider pushing from outside, but an equal joining hands with another and coaxing him along, much like a boisterous friend does with a shy one. For now, then, linking and building is key. This means members must be directly involved with organizations on all parts of the spectrum and fulfilling two roles. The first is establishing open communication with organizations on other parts of the spectrum; and the second is encouraging tangible work that benefits not only the organization in question, but also the work of others on lesser ends of the spectrum. For instance, litigation by a group hoping to preserve a specific species should be done in such a way to benefit the broader plan of wildlands conservation in the same area. Conversely, the group involved in the broader plan should be radical enough that any lesser acquiescence to its demands will aid species conservation. This is the same thing Earth First! did for the Sierra Club, its radicalism allowing the Sierra Club to make more appropriate demands, except this tactic will be employed to all places on the spectrum.

Building the spectrum will mostly mean instituting radical organizations. This must be done carefully, and on

the part of party members legally. Of course, illegal actions are, once again, logically necessary, whether or not I condone them personally, but party members need not and should not be directly involved or knowledgeable of the specifics to link an organization suspected to be radical to other, more moderate, organizations. This is especially true in our first few years of work.

Being rewilders, members should focus on action pertaining to the rewilding program proposed by the Nature Needs Half campaign and the Wildlands Network (see Foreman 2004). Where possible, we should prefer work aiding this effort by, for instance, attempting to build the megalinkages. Moderate organizations should be encouraged to campaign, to litigate, and so forth. And radical organizations should not be encouraged to do any specific actions, except for maybe civil disobedience, but members would do well to turn their focus to the program. They might provide the necessary radical element to slow development in an area important to a megalinkage or a corridor. For instance, the current Earth First! organization, although now a progressivist one, may be benefitted by articles submitted to its journal or a presentation about the rewilding program at a Rendezvous.

The focus on the rewilding program also allows us to build the moral basis of our reactionary program and strengthen our resolve. If one thing has been made clear by this essay, it is that revolution is a tenuous and uncertain project, and such a modest first step ensures that even if we are wrong, we will be benefitting those things that we can undoubtedly support: more wildlands, bigger wildlands, more connected wildlands.

The party, a public, above-ground organization, should also present wildist ideas to the public incessantly, which also means they should require their own members to be presentable. Implicit in this is a focus on journalistic work. George Monbiot (2015) and, to an extent, Paul Kingsnorth (2011), are examples of conservationists already encouraging the rewilding program through journalism (they are not wildists, to my knowledge). It has greatly improved public awareness of the project and, more importantly, it is an extremely effective method of recruitment, which apart from operating as the conscience of conservation, must be the second initial focus of the party.

Note that the main orientation of the party is not toward the public, but the movement. Once again, the point is to be the conscience of conservation, presenting its distilled critique of progress, guarding against the revisionists, and fortifying the movement's infrastructure so that the capacity for effective action is improved. The public is important for this, but it is not necessary.

Those are our current tasks, but of course work must also be done within the party to outline future ones. This includes, for instance, outlining additional provisions to the rewilding program that make clear our take on its demands. Believing it to be impossible without the end of industry, we might add provisions like: ending road development with a focus on lands in the program, ending dam development and a list of a few dams to be dismantled, banning planes and drones from flying over core protected areas, deindustrialization in urban areas affecting the program, and other such things. Although we could of course simply state the end of industry, a specific list of demands is no threat to that being the implication, and it is more appealing psychologically to those reading it, or at least more understandable. Furthermore, it makes clear the reasons for the end of industry, and, most importantly, provides tangible benchmarks in our effort, so that we do not continue pursuing some undefined goal and revolt ourselves into exhaustion. The original Earth First! program could be a useful inspiration for this task (Foreman, 1981).

Another future task to consider is sorting out practical problems with the reaction. Where and to what degree should we utilize a network structure? What tasks would best be coordinated through the internet, and how might we teach our members how to use the internet securely? What other movements (e.g., the pro-privacy whistleblowing groups, the hackers) might we be able to link to our own while also contributing to theirs?

This is only a modest sketch, and may seem especially modest when placed against the backdrop of our lofty reactionary ends. But recall that most do not believe in revolution. Such small steps, then, are important for unlearning helplessness. Let's remind ourselves that we can be strong again.

IX. Conclusion

Various rebuttals to the anti-industrial reaction have been proposed, but most do not hold. Collapse is not only possible, but arguably likely, and past revolutions have demonstrated a level of organization that is more than sufficient for the wildist effort. Therefore, instead of focusing on feasibility, we should be much more concerned with morality. But the voiced moral rebuttals do not stand either. For instance, the contention that collapsing medical technology or flourishing human nature has negative consequences is a confused one; and the idea that a reaction is incompatible with the wildist ideology is a false

one. Nevertheless, at least three worthwhile critiques stand.

The first is the difficult problem of complex technologies that cause disaster when they collapse. Nuclear is the most common example, but technologies involved in hi-tech physics experiments, disease labs, and weapons technologies are also relevant. Second is the problem of population, which we realize will always remain a problem, for progressivists just as much as wildists. And third is the very real threat of human folly, to which I respond that we should look to the wisdom of the American Revolutionaries. Still, these three issues are for now not enough to delegitimize an anti-industrial reaction, at least so far as wildness is our starting value.

This in mind, wildists may begin their first tasks of building and linking the tactical spectrum. This should be done by creating a party for wildness-centered conservationists with the task of being the conscience of conservation. This party will be a revolutionary one, and its goal of disrupting industry beyond repair must be explicit. It will preserve, direct, and fortify the conservation movement; it will present its message of revolution before the public; and it will lay the groundwork for future tasks as the movement itself becomes more confident. This is our present work, so let's get on with it.

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Misanthropy

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***Abstract*—Progressivists sometimes charge that conservationists are misanthropes. In reality, progressivists are the real misanthropes, since they disdain human nature and seek to "improve" it into non-existence. As a result, they only consider "human" (and "humane") those things that benefit civilized conditions, and use this as the framework by which to judge whether or not an ideology is misanthropic. What's more, any actually misanthropic positions among ecocentrists is due precisely to the influence of progressivism, particularly utilitarian calculations made possible by its egalitarianism and indiscriminately altruistic approach to ethics. In the end, only wildism comes out being the non-misanthropic philosophy.**

I. Introduction

A common jab directed against conservationists claims that they are misanthropes. The response to this has been outright denial to ironic affirmation. For instance, early in the history of Earth First! the group sold bumper stickers and t-shirts with the word, along with other cute slogans like "Malthus was right."

The claims usually center around two recurring ideas or principles assumed by conservationists. First, conservationists sometimes argue that the human race is the problem, and that non-human nature would arguably be better off if humans disappeared. Associated in the minds of critics is the conservationist belief that a massive reduction in the human population is axiomatic to conservation. The population problem, however, is its own issue, and I do not address it in this essay.

But as for the misanthropy of some conservationists, after some thought we can discern that this is actually due to a progressivist philosophy, which is itself the true embodiment of misanthropy. In the end, then, the solution to non-misanthropic views and appreciating human nature is to dispose of progressivism and embrace the respect for nature and nature's wildness that wildism entails.

II. Ecocentrism and Wildism

Because "ecocentrism" is somewhat amorphous, as are most concepts in deep ecology, wildism is arguably ecocentric and it certainly stems from and responds to the ecocentric tradition (see the introduction to "The Foundations of Wildist Ethics" and "Relations and the Moral Circle"). In fact, most of the reasons wildists avoid the term have not kept many prominent and unrepenting deep ecologists from keeping their definitive place in the tradition. For instance, Hettinger & Throop argue for a focus on wildness instead of life, per se, but both are foremost deep ecology philosophers.

Nevertheless, ecocentrism is usually associated with an expanded moral circle approach to ethics. That is, they hope to continue expanding the circle of altruism, which began with the band and is presently extended to all of humanity, so that it encompasses nature as well. There are many philosophical issues inherent in this position ("Relations and the Moral Circle"), but, notable for this essay, it also directly leads to misanthropic positions: disdain for natural human social relations, disdain for the existence of the human species, and anti-natalism, or disdain for natural human reproductive practices. But because wildism does not take the expanded moral circle approach, it is not misanthropic, and is, in fact, far less disdainful of humanity than even the progressivists are.

Two clarifications. First, "natural" does not mean "good" in the altruistic, philosophical sense. Instead, wildists argue that the narrative of progress, that nature can be made better with civilized, artificial modification and therefore should be, must be challenged. This is because in our attempt to challenge civilization's material destruction, we necessary need to challenge, at least among active wildists, its superstructural justifications.

But this challenge does not mean that artifice per se is sin or a taint on nature. As I've noted before, nature and artifice exist on a spectrum from wild to tame to domesticated to fully artificial, and all are *to some extent* a legitimate part of our world. Furthermore, artifice is an important element of the natural human condition, since humans have always engaged in making artifacts and artistic creations, so to destroy all artifice would require destroying human beings.

Thus, when we rail against artifice in relation to the myth of progress, we mean something very specific. It is of course possible to "progress" as far as that is just a general verb. You can progress from one end of a room to another, and it is possible to say that a piece of wood was made instrumentally better when it was sharpened. But the myth of progress is specifically referencing not just development or directionality in general, but movement

from natural to artificial as an *imperative*. Progressivism isn't just a statement that civilization is valuable or nice to have, but that it is morally good, and therefore that we are obligated to progress. In contrast, rewilding is about tearing down the idols of civilization and moving the world further toward wildness. It is also not borne from altruism, like progress, which brings us to our next clarification.

We would do well to distinguish between two kinds of morality[1]: the altruistic and the axiological, or value-based. The former in our natural condition extends mostly to our relations[2] (for evolutionary reasons). It is also defined by some irrational impulses and legitimates otherwise odd behaviors, like martyrdom. As I've said, humanism hopes to extend these practices to all of humanity and progressive ecocentrism hopes to extend them to all of nature.

But wildism is an axiological morality, which means it relies much more on moral reasoning, deriving conclusions from some base values, the most important of which is wildness. For instance, instead of arguing that we have altruistic obligations toward nature, we note that we value wildness, which in our current condition obviously produces the imperative to conserve and rewild. This also means that, whereas progressivists feel an altruistic imperative to artificially modify nature for the good of humanity, wildists rewild because of statements of value, which has little to do with altruism.

Finally, it is worth noting that some humanisms are axiological, usually based on a version of utilitarianism. See, for instance, Greene, 2013; Pinker, 2011; Singer, 1983; and Singer, 2000.

III. Progressivism's Misanthropy

Progressivism often claims that wildists are misanthropic because they do not regard humans as having special moral status by virtue of their humanity, or because they do not regard every human being as due equal moral consideration. However, these ideas reveal that it is the progressivists themselves who are misanthropic: they disdain the natural human and hope only to improve him, which in the long term amounts to his transformation into something else entirely. In the short term this amounts to the domination and suppression of his nature, the source of many of our current social problems.

Rubin has a particularly powerful critique of this point in his book, *The Eclipse of Man*, in which he critiques transhumanism, the next major ideology of progress. He notes, for instance, that transhumanism lacks grounding because it involves modifying the very desires that are supposed to be the measure by which we hold progress. This is because of the oft-forgotten fact that genetic engineering (for instance) does not just modify baby faces; it also modifies baby minds. As a result,

> *It becomes harder and harder for our authors to imagine what will be retained, hence where change will start from. And if the rate of change is accelerating, that simply means we are headed the more rapidly from one unknown to another, while the recognizable old standards for judging whether the changes are progressive are overthrown with our humanity.*

The same applies for all previous civilizations. Cities did not just require managing ecosystems, but also called for managing human beings, which is why they birthed states, police forces, propaganda machines, artificial desires, institutional distractions, etc. Hunter/gatherers would not willingly choose to adopt a nine-to-five job, which is why things like the pacification process and the civilizing process were called for.

The most intellectually astute progressivists recognize this and argue that these things have nevertheless been good, allowing for the expulsion of many kinds of diseases, a drastic reduction in violence, longer life expectancies at birth, and many other things. They also usually recognize that these are *post hoc* justifications: humans did not decide to make the world less violent and then achieve this through technical development. Instead, overall technics developed autonomously—they evolved—and took humans beings along with them.

But wildists, and many humans, for that matter, are uneasy with the fact that modern society controls their natures to such a degree, and this is even taking into consideration that most human beings do not understand the sources of their unrest.

IV. Ecocentrism's Misanthropy

Ecocentrism is misanthropic when it is of the expanded moral circle approach, which is progressive. In

[1] I define "morality" broadly, "the rules, self-imposed or collectively-imposed, that govern behavior."

[2] "Relations" is a technical term in wildism, referencing an individual's natural group of close friends, family, and environments. In the nomadic hunter/gatherer condition, an individual's relations amounted to the band and the ecosystems in which he lived. Relations are largely restricted by biological and other material factors. See, for instance, Dunbar's number (Dunbar, 1992).

other words, misanthropy is the direct result of the very same philosophy that the progressivists who make the charge espouse.

For instance, ecocentrists sometimes dislike humanity because it is selfish rather than cooperative and altruistic, which they claim would allow the non-human world to flourish. This is the same as the humanist narrative, except extended. Of course, technically this attitude does not embody the *ideal* of progressivist solidarity, since it is ambivalent toward one group (humans) who are included within that ideal. But because it ascribes equal moral value to both humans and non-humans (usually expressed as "rights"), it allows for the possibility of martyrdom, which tellingly became prominent with the rise of another progressivist philosophy, Christianity, from which humanist ethics sprung. In other words, it allows for the utilitarian calculation that, since all suffering is equally bad, and since ending humanity would (according to the progressive ecocentrists) decrease overall suffering, the end of humanity is worth it. This is the same as saying that killing one person is better than killing five, a common humanist utilitarian thought experiment called "the trolley problem" (Greene, 2013). All this, plus martyrdom in this case relies on the philosophical belief that value can be objective (e.g., external to humans), which is not possible with a materialist analysis (see "Relations and the Moral Circle").

All the above applies to the anti-natalism of some ecocentrists, but this brings up an additional point. Both the expanded moral circle approach and anti-natalism are, like other progressivisms, philosophies that try to implement reasoned abstractions onto nature in order to improve it for the sake of some body with equal moral value. The expanded circle has disdain for humanity's natural propensity to favor relations; anti-natalism has disdain for humanity's natural reproductive practices; etc. This is not wildism, but a renewed progressivism, one that could even become useful for changing economic and technical conditions (see "Refuting the Apartheid Alternative").

V. Conclusion

Although progressivists often like to claim that those in the conservation and environmentalist movements are misanthropes, the very same beliefs that compel them to make this claim actually reveal that *they* are misanthropes. These philosophical beliefs are also the reason some progressive ecocentrists advocate misanthropic positions, which reveals that it isn't conservation that is the problem, but progressivism. Wildists, in contrast, advocate the defense of nature, including human nature, against the revolutionary projects of the progressivists, who seek to "improve" all these things for the sake of their expanded circle of altruistic morality. As a result, wildist and wildness-centered conservationists are, in fact, the only notable challenge to progressivism's misanthropy.

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Ideology and Revisionism

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***Abstract*—Ideology is a defined spectrum of beliefs that unite individuals with similar values and determines their approach to action, often even specifying some actions. Revisionism poses a threat to the effectiveness of ideology, however, because it weakens and degrades the unity of action that ideology makes possible, mostly by splitting the movement and sowing discord and confusion. This essay explains the particulars of these ideas and the seriousness of the revisionist threat, with a specific eye toward their meaning in the context of wildism. It also surveys some relevant revisionist ideologies.**

I. Introduction

One of the main threats to conservation today is the threat of revisionism, from the perversions of the Anthropoceners to the confused character of the environmental justice movement. The phenomenon of revisionism, however, can present a great threat to a movement, especially one that relies on ideology as strongly as wildism must. But in order to understand the phenomenon and the gravity of its threat, it is important to understand the meaning of ideology, its importance, and what, precisely, revisionism is.

II. From Egoism to Ideology

A. Clarifications Regarding Egoism

Two logical outcomes of a materialist analysis are positions that in philosophy are called "egoism" and "nihilism." Nihilism is the understanding that there is no objective value in the world, and thus that all value is "imbued" by a valuer. Egoism is an extension of this understanding, the idea that humans act from their "self-interest." Wildists are egoists, but very particular kinds of egoists, and since egoist philosophy is full of many kinds of patently false lines of reasoning, let me clarify.

There are two kinds of egoism: descriptive and prescriptive. The former understands egoism as the reality of the world, whether or not people choose to live with a conscious understanding of it. The latter makes the egoist position a normative one. In general, wildist egoism is of the former variety, but it has repercussions for our normative claims.

Also, the definitions of "self-interest" in egoism differ widely, but we can be certain that the definition stemming from the idea of the "rational actor," common in economics, is untrue, thanks mostly to cognitive science and evolutionary theory (Kahneman, 2011). Furthermore, "hard" versions of egoism claim that altruistic behavior is an illusion. This is also untrue, something we can again understand thanks to evolutionary theory, but also from simple observation of the world and the numerous examples of animals behaving altruistically. This is thanks to the fact that natural selection, in general, operates on the gene, not the organism, so as long as organism-level altruism benefits the gene's fitness, the behavior will survive and propagate. This is why, for instance, some male spiders mate with females even though the females eat them afterwards (Dawkins, 1976). In the case of these kinds of altruism, however, the behavior still stems from what the organism himself wants, consciously or not, and not because of any objective, non-material force that compels him to as a moral obligation. "Self-interest," then, is probably not the best term, but if we are to define it in accordance with these facts, we would have to say it means the wants and needs of the organism himself.[1]

Finally, anyone interested in reading more about egoism should be aware that its principle theorist, Max Stirner, frequently fell into idealist (i.e., non-materialist) traps. For instance, he seemed to believe that merely becoming conscious of the egoistic and nihilistic nature of reality was a path to liberation, since it could compel the individual to act according to rules when he wanted to and no other time. He also, and perhaps as a result, frequently disregarded material factors that determine the individual's condition, arguing that most of the individual's bondage consists of "spooks" or illusions. But this completely disregards the material basis of many institutions that underpin the individual's subjugation, like the state, police forces, and technical society in general. As a result, some of his conclusions, especially his ideas around the family and some forms of social organization, are faulty. The method, then, for discerning what is useful and what is trash in Stirner's philosophy is to approach him with

[1] Because "self-interest" is the only available terminology, I will continue to use it in quotes for the rest of the essay. However, readers should keep in mind the particular definition offered and not be surprised if another term is used at some later point.

"the cadres' razor"—scientific materialism. The same applies to Nietzsche, Darwin, and others who investigated the ethical implications of materialism, but who nevertheless failed occasionally to accept those implications completely.

B. Egoism in Wildist Ethics

As made clear in "The Foundations of Wildist Ethics," wildist ethical philosophy begins with a statement of the "intrinsic" value of wild nature. In a later essay ("Relations and the Moral Circle") I clarify this position:

> *In "Foundations" I wrote that "intrinsic" means "non-instrumental" and "non-derivative" (p. 15). However, "non-instrumental" is not always strictly accurate. I used it for much the same reason I still sometimes speak of "free will": the reality underlying what we perceive as free will is non-intuitive, and acting as though we have free will is still necessary for various reasons. Still, after further thought I have concluded that it poses no real risk to say that our valuing nature is in some ways instrumental, but not in the solely economic sense.*
>
> *To say that nature has "intrinsic" value, then, is mostly a way of saying "here is a point at which further elaboration is unhelpful." That is, we could say that I value nature because of a love of natural noise (compared to the industrial racket), because of aesthetic preference, because of my cravings for communion with animals to a greater degree than is possible in the city, because of my desire for purposeful, goal-oriented activity, or I could even say "simply because." And then another person might name some other specific convergence of wants and needs that join to make him concerned with nature, the world maintained by the absence of human control. Elaboration on these points, however, is unhelpful, because the state of nature makes now the time to figure out the basis on which we can find political affinity. The starting point of this political project, the thing with non-derivative or intrinsic value, is nature.*

From here, wildist's normative claims are a logical extension of the consequences of valuing wildness in our current material condition. For instance, those who value wildness must in this time be concerned with conservation and rewilding. This is not a Christian prescription: there is no Divine force that commands the obligation. Instead, the obligation is a logical consequence of the wildist's starting value (and the conditions in which he finds himself, of course).

C. Ideology as Coalition

It is of course legitimate for an individual to remain a lone actor, but this often reduces the individual's effectiveness in achieving his goals. The trick for the egoist is to find a way to act collectively without subordinating himself permanently and to an unacceptable degree to those "interests" that are not his own. (It is, for practical reasons, impossible to avoid subordinating oneself at all times. For instance, we cannot always know whether another, perhaps trusted, individual's decision is in our own "self-interest," and taking the risk to trust them may nevertheless be useful overall. This is the nature of life.) Stirner called his own idea a "union of egoists." In looking at our available options, wildists argue that a skeletal ideology offers the basis for unified action.

Ideology is to the collective what the starting "intrinsic" value is to the individual: a practical limit at which further difference is irrelevant or unhelpful to explain. In other words, the point of the ideology is to unite a group "narrow enough to entail a politically discrete population…and not so broad as to be meaningless" ("The Foundations of Wildist Ethics," p. 19).

Ideology is separate from organization and can in fact contain many different organizations. This is inevitable given the variety of human "interests." In other words, while those at The Wildist Institute are involved primarily in the creation of a specific party-form of organization (a "combat party"), wildism does not exclude other forms of organization and logically requires them. (Consider, for instance, sleeper cadres that operate autonomously of the party.) This is why ideology is so important: it allows diverse forms of organization to unite under a broader coalition for more effective action. In order for this coalition to be preserved, however, *all* members must accept *all* core elements of the ideology.

Wildists, for example, are united by three core elements. First is *the scientific materialist worldview*, which influences all aspects of our analysis and is indispensable for cadre work (in fact, it is called "the cadres' razor"). Although scientific materialism contains many abstract philosophical assumptions, and can in fact accommodate a spectrum of contradictory ones, wildists need not agree on these ultra-fundamental details, since their main emphasis is on unified action facilitated by ideology. Often this idea is shortened into the phrase, "Talk is everywhere, but rewild is verb." Of course, this emphasis on specific and unified action is true much in the same way

it is true in science, where individual scientists may believe in God personally, but where this doesn't really affect their scientific work. Some Jewish groups put a similar emphasis on action before belief, arguing that Judaism only prescribes that the Jew perpetually grapple with the existence of God, whatever his conclusions at the time, but must reliably fulfill God's commandments. For instance, in the *Tanakh* it is written, "They have forsaken me and not kept my Torah," to which a Rabbinical commentary quips, "If only they had forsaken me and kept my Torah." Of course, these Jews nevertheless regard the fundamentals of their ideology as important, and still regard certain kinds of revisionism a great threat. This dynamic within Judaism and science is akin to the dynamic within wildism.

Second, the core of wildism is its *critique of Progress*. Part of the work of invalidating the progressive mythology is pushing the empirical claim of technical autonomy ("Foundations of Wildist Ethics," section III.C), but this is mostly a practical concern. People are less excited about technical evolution when they understand that they cannot direct it. The core of the wildist critique is a challenge to the normative claim of the mythology: that civilized modification of nature is morally good, and is therefore an obligation. In contrast, wildists advocate *wildness* as a core value, the most substantial challenge to progressivism possible.

Finally, wildists note that among those who value wildness, there is an imperative to *rewild*. This involves a spectrum of actions that range from the personal to the social, the moderate to the radical. The main work of The Wildist Institute in particular is coaxing wildness-centered elements further along the radical side of the spectrum in order to make possible an anti-industrial reaction, if objective, non-controllable factors make such a reaction possible. Wildism itself requires, as part of the imperative to rewild, the belief that a reaction is desirable and that paving the way for a reaction is an important element of any rewilding work. Much of the institute's work has been and continues to be explicating the reasons why this belief is a logical deduction given our current condition and our values.

These are of course only the explicit elements of the ideology, and there are undoubtedly unexamined, implicit elements that are important as well. One possible example is the cadre form of organization. But since organization is a much more practical question than ideology, and since it involves trade-offs that individuals may regard more or less acceptable given their dispositions and character, the question of organization is a topic for another time.

III. Revisionism

A. What is Revisionism?

Revisionism is the phenomenon whereby a hostile tendency modifies core elements of an ideology in order to make it more palatable to the hostile tendency, or in order to weaken the movement united by the ideology. In our case, this has occurred primarily with progressivist revisionism within the conservation movement.

The phenomenon of revisionism takes place in many political and ideological terrains. Taking again the examples of science and Judaism, the former has had to face creationist revisionism, or scientists attempting to show that the concept of God and sometimes biblical literalism are scientific concepts; and the latter has had to face many waves of revisionism, the most egregious being the so-called "Messianic Jews," who claim the Christian Jesus as the Jewish messiah.

The threat of revisionism lies not in different understandings of facts. For instance, a theory is not revisionist in relation to science if it proposes an alternative to prevailing evolutionary theory, although it may be revisionist in relation to the prevailing paradigm. In other words, while Copernicus was a revisionist in relation to the geocentric cosmological model, he was no revisionist in relation to scientific methodology, and indeed demonstrated that he followed that methodology more rigorously than his geocentric colleagues. The former kind of revisionism is no threat and can be healthy, and only because of the vaguities of language can they be called the same name.[2] In conservation science, for instance, it is a good thing for someone to "revise" common methods of conservation in light of new facts.

Instead of facts, revisionism is a threat in relation to values. For instance, creation "science" is revisionist because it betrays the epistemological values of parsimony, scope, accuracy, consistency, etc. Messianic "Judaism" is revisionist because its belief in the Christian Jesus modifies core values of Jewish doctrine by placing more em-

[2] In wildist technical terminology, however, the two kinds are not both referred to by the same name, and "revisionism" is reserved exclusively for the latter tendency

phasis on eschatological concerns, recalibrating the relationship between the Jewish and Gentile people, between Israel and Jews, etc. This obviously affects actions, since imperatives are created by a combination of values and conditions; but when values are modified, imperatives change, and unity of action is degraded.

B. A Survey of Revisionist Ideologies

Revisionist ideologies may qualify as such under several conditions. First, they may claim a different name but appear similar because of their refusal to also dispose of the discourse and major goals of the ideology. For instance, some anarchists, primitivists, and anti-civilizationists espouse similar goals as wildism but on the basis of progressivist values. As a result, the "leftism" that they rail against is the same "leftism" that the New Left rails against, namely, the Old Left. Instead of equating "leftism" with progressivist values, then, they argue that it is anything with the character of the Old (mostly Marxist) Left and its organizationalism, scientific analysis, and class reductionism. This is not so much a problem anymore, since wildists no longer use the terminology when "progressivism," "opportunism,"[3] and "humanism"[4] adequately address the threats that "leftism" sought to cover. But for a long time this created some confusion.

To be clear, the primitivists *et al.* are not revisionists, and are instead totally separate ideologies (they are better described as confused humanists). However, they do present a threat of revisionism because some confused member of their ranks, or some stranger who is somewhat familiar with their writings, may attempt to integrate their progressive values into the wildist ideology.

This has already occurred, and it demonstrates another way an ideology may qualify as revisionist. Recently some followers of John Zerzan, the principle theorist of anarcho-primitivism, attempted to claim the name of "wildism" as their own and associate it with the non-scientific field of ecopsychology, feminist ideas, and various other kinds of nonsense. They have since desisted, but we can expect similar attempts in the future.

Outside of obscure ideologies, the conservation movement as a whole has faced many revisionist attacks, the most blatant and dangerous of these being the ecomodernists, who I addressed in "Refuting the Apartheid Alternative." They attempt to integrate progressive values by virtue of a single economic phenomenon found in a handful of commodities, something they call "decoupling." On this basis, they argue for the acceleration of technical and economic development and the establishment of "island civilizations" so that the nature outside of those islands can flourish. Worse, they coopt the Rewilding Program devised by The Wildlands Network, failing to note who it was devised by and giving the impression that they themselves devised it; they argue for a revisionist concept of rewilding that incudes de-extinction of species through biotechnology; and they use the label of conservation even though they are closely aligned with the Anthropoceners, who emphasize humanist moral concerns over conservationist ones. Similar tendencies of this sort have been found in the environmental justice movement (Wuerthner, Crist, & Butler, 2014).

Finally, a common form of revisionism waters down the radical nature of an ideology. In our case, this means de-emphasizing the importance of an anti-industrial reaction and instead emphasizing more personal, or moderate, forms of rewilding. Several revisionists of this type have occurred so far, but as it stands they are tangential and no serious threat.

C. The Threats of Revisionism and Their Solutions

Revisionist ideologies must be avoided because they confuse members and sympathizers, weaken the ideological coalition, and degrade unity of action. Thus, wildists must fiercely renounce revisionist ideologies, avoid revisionist influence, but most importantly to preserve the terrain on which wildism and conservation depend in order to enact their goals.

Our main battle is against the infrastructure of industrial society and by extension the technocrats and armed forces that develop, maintain, and protect it. Battles with revisionist ideologies must therefore be secondary, or even tertiary, or less, and only in relation to the overarching goal of disrupting industry beyond repair. For the most part, this involves guarding our ideological terrain against revisionism; so long as the value of wildness is

[3] "Opportunism" is the tendency to take advantage of an opportunity regardless of the principle of it. Opportunists are common in academia and humanist movements on the political left, both because of an activist infrastructure left over from the 60s and looking desperately for a new source of revolt.

[4] "Humanism" is the dominant progressivist ideology, united by the values of solidarity between all humans, equality for all humans, and the integration of victimized classes. Left-wing movements (and the libertarians on the right) are commonly known for enforcing the humanist concern for victims, while right wing humanists often accept a more practical view that still favors the nation as an ethical reference point. Humanism was birthed from Christianity and has birthed animal rights ideologies, progressive ecocentrism, and transhumanism.

preserved within this terrain, revisionists can mostly be ignored. The process of guarding this terrain is called being the "conscience of conservation."

IV. Conclusion

Ideologies are means by which self-conscious individuals enter into a coalition with other individuals on the basis of a core set of values and conclusions about those values. The ideology of wildism has three such broad elements: the scientific materialist worldview, the critique of progress, and the imperative to rewild with an eye toward political reaction.

Revisionists are those who attempt to use the name, discourse, or core elements of wildism with severe modification affecting its main values and deductions. So far we have seen revisionists in a few groups: the ecomodernists, some primitivist actors, the environmental justice advocates, and the Anthropoceners, among others.

In order to facilitate our goal of disrupting industry beyond repair, wildists must maintain their ideological terrain by guarding it against revisionist threats. Otherwise, the ideological coalition will be weakened, members and sympathizers will be confused, unity of action will degrade. Guarding against these threats is what is meant by the saying that wildists should be the "conscience of conservation."

Although the ideas outlined here are neat and tidy in the abstract, especially the idea of egoist individuals rationally joining a coalition, this is only an abstract model, and when applied to real life it will necessarily become messier. These questions all fall under the banner of "organization," which wildists recognize comes with trade-offs and a pragmatic approach, as well as a materialist approach, as always. In the future, then, we must start with these ideas on ideology and develop arguments for relevant trade-offs and specific organizational models.

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Technical Autonomy

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***Abstract*—Civilization's justifying narrative has always been the myth of Progress, or the idea that civilized modification of nature is good and therefore a moral obligation. In our present time the dominant progressive narrative is a humanist one—that is, artifice is justified by the good or supposed good it does for humans. However, most people support Progress because of an associated myth that alleges humans can control the direction of Progress. Thus, when some individual or group questions technical development, most respond that technics have just been used improperly, and what we really need to do is add ethical direction. The myth of rational control rests on four faulty assumptions: (1) that human reason is sufficient; (2) that rational blueprints will be implemented properly or at all; (3) that the blueprints will go as planned; (4) that the blueprints won't have unintended consequences. This article examines these assumptions and, showing they are false, outlines their implications for the myth of Progress.**

I. Introduction

Progress" is the word used to indicate civilization's dominant mythology: the civilized modification of nature is good and therefore a moral obligation. In terms of techno-industrial society, or late industrial society,[1] the dominant progressivist narrative is a humanist[2] one, so justifies civilized artifice by arguing that it is good for humans. At base, irrefutable critiques of Progress have to emphasize the value of wild nature—a normative challenge to progressivists' normative claims. However, an associated myth that validates Progress in the minds of many is descriptive: humans believe and are told that they can direct Progress, that it is the result of their reason. If this claim was shown to be false, fewer people would be enthused about technical development, since they often believe that it fails because of improper guidance and respond to failures by trying to get people with their own values in power, or by trying to enforce their values through social movements. They would also be less enthused because it means that humans are dominated by technics[3] just as much as non-human nature is.

Since the associated belief—the myth of rational control—is descriptive, it can be invalidated through scientific reasoning and empirical evidence. And it is indeed false, resting on four faulty premises:

1. It assumes that rational blueprints can be sufficient.
2. It assumes that rational blueprints, when sufficient, will be implemented properly or at all.
3. It assumes that rational blueprints, when implemented, will go as planned.
4. It assumes that rational blueprints, when they go as planned, will not have unintended consequences.

In reality, technics develop autonomously of any human being, group of human beings, and humanity as a whole. That is, technics *evolve*. For the purposes of this essay, the actual mechanisms by which technics evolve is irrelevant; a confluence of evidence indicates that it does so nonetheless, and that the mechanisms are merely a puzzle waiting for a solution. In fact, some scientists are already working on that puzzle. Here I only outline our knowledge of the theory of technical evolution so far in order to demonstrate that regardless of the mechanisms,

[1] "Techno-industrial society" or "late industrial society" (also referred to as "post-industrial society" or "the information age") is the phase of industrial development that began roughly around WWII. It differs from the previous phase of industry in several respects, notably, its emphasis on information, its megalithic technologies, and its increased reliance on propaganda. For some general reasons why, see Hanlon, 2014; Beniger, 1989.

[2] "Humanism" is the dominant progressivist ideology, united by the values of solidarity between all humans, equality for all humans, and the integration of victimized classes. Left-wing movements (and the libertarians on the right) are commonly known for enforcing the humanist concern for victims, while right wing humanists often accept a more practical view that still favors the nation as an ethical reference point. Humanism was birthed from Christianity and has birthed animal rights ideologies, progressive ecocentrism, and transhumanism.

[3] "Technics" is a general word referencing means by which natural energy is harnessed for an efficient end. In common language people often substitute the word "technology," but because of its ambiguity, I only use "technology" to refer to material tools, machines, and apparatuses that harness natural energy for an efficient end. "Techniques" are methods to do this. While any species can have technics, only human technics are called "artifacts."

the four premises of the myth of rational control are false. This puts technical development out of the hands of human beings and has great repercussions for progressivism.

II. The Four Faulty Premises

A. *Rational Blueprints Aren't Sufficient*

In order for the myth of rational control to be true, humans have to know enough to change society without too many uncontrollable, unintended consequences. But that is not the case. This critique includes knowledge on the individual, group, and species level—that is, it applies even to collective knowledge through, for instance, computing systems.

Some of this is clear through abstract reasoning about the issue. If a system is devised so that it can properly understand and predict phenomena in a given society, any society that possesses it necessarily becomes more complex, and it then must devise a second system to understand and predict phenomena in "society plus the first system." This is because the first system will itself affect the goings-on of a society and contribute more complexity. Thus, it is never possible to have absolute self-knowledge.

Of course, this does not mean that prediction is impossible, but there are practical limits. Societies are complex systems, which means that miniscule differences in their starting conditions can result in drastic differences later on. Thus, predicting social phenomena is a lot like predicting the weather or the economy, which also deal with a complex system. And as everyone knows, weathermen and economists frequently make inaccurate predictions.

In other words, those who argue that technical progress can be good if only we had the proper institutions to direct it must explain how the group of people given authority to determine "good" will make their decisions. Since they will be like weathermen, we can be sure that their predictions will almost only be accurate in the short term, not even considering "unknown unknowns" and unintended consequences. For instance, at the time cars or cellphones were invented, no one knew the far-reaching changes they were going to bring to society, and no one could have known. How, then, could any group of people have directed these inventions to ensure that their consequences were "good" ones? As a practical example for our current time, how would anyone go about properly predicting and assessing the consequences of biotechnics?

There are numerous examples supporting the position that no one actually can. For instance, a recent article entitled "Why aren't urban planners ready for driverless cars?" one planner was quoted as saying, "We don't know what the hell to do about it. It's like pondering the imponderable" (Jaffe, 2015). This *may* be fine when it comes to benign technical inventions, of course, but in our current world of massive technologies with far-reaching, global consequences this is unacceptable, and not what most would call "sufficient knowledge."

Furthermore, it is impossible for humans even now to understand many technical systems on which industrial society depends. A common example is the stock market, almost 70% of which now depends on "black box trading" or "algo-trading." Black box trading is a practice whereby algorithms do the actual trading between businesses and brokers. It is an almost entirely automated process, and very efficient. But nobody actually knows what algorithms are running the stock market. In fact, it is the job of some companies to go in, pick out algorithms, and give them cute names like "the knife" so that we can know what, precisely, is determining the outcome of your pension. This obviously comes with some problems. In May of 2010, an event now known as the Flash Crash of 2:45 occurred, during which 9% of the stock market just disappeared. To this day, no one knows exactly what happened. Something similar occurred in 2015, and as a result stocks from PepsiCo, JP Morgan, and Ford Motor, among others, declined up to 20%. A 2013 article from *Nature* described this algorithm-run stock market as a "machine ecology beyond human response time" (Johnson, et al., 2013).

We also can't forget that social systems consist of humans and are dependent on human behavior, other complex phenomena, and this introduces an inherent amount of instability that only decreases with more complex social systems. So consider that in 2010, when the AP Twitter account was hacked to announce that the White House had been attacked and Obama injured, the stock market suffered another flash crash that resulted in a 130-point plunge in the Dow Jones Industrial Average (Matthews, 2013).

Perhaps if industrial societies were not yet dependent on these technical systems, advocates of rational control could make a stronger case for ethical direction of technical progress. However, our already-established dependence severely weakens this argument, since we've arguably reached a point where the practical knowledge required would not be sufficient for proper ethical direction.

Lest someone think that this only applies to the stock market, consider the example of airplane Traffic Alert Systems. One article (Arbeson) explains,

> *Despite the vastness of the sky, airplanes occasionally crash into each other. To avoid these catastrophes, the Traffic Alert and Collision Avoidance System (TCAS) was developed. TCAS alerts pilots to potential hazards, and tells them how to respond by using a series of complicated rules. In fact, this set of rules — developed over decades — is so complex, perhaps only a handful of individuals alive even understand it anymore.*

In fact, even technical systems not composed of metal qualify as beyond our control, like bureaucracies. Who really understands the dynamics of a US government or a large, international NGO? Nobody, of course. That doesn't keep these things from operating, but it does mean that any attempt to direct them for "good" has to face possibly insurmountable practical problems.

Finally, humans can't hope to ever predict some technical developments. For instance, the moment an AI becomes as intelligent as a human is the moment it becomes more intelligent. After that, no one can predict or even understand what the AI will do; that is absolutely outside of our ability. This means that for AI and technical developments like it (e.g., biotech, nanotech, etc.), a large part of the "improvement" actually can't be judged as so until after the fact, and maybe not even then. For instance, if an AI (or a whole AI system on which industrial humans are dependent) becomes malicious, there may not be much we can do about it. Saying that we could just turn them off is like saying the monkeys could just turn us off because we keep destroying their habitats. Indeed, many from the technician class know this, yet pursue technical development regardless. For instance, Claude Shannon, the founder of information science, said, "I can visualize a time in the future when we will be to robots as dogs are to humans…[and] I'm rooting for the machines" (Liversidge, 1987).

B. Rational Blueprints Often Can't Be and Aren't Implemented Properly

Even if humans did know enough to direct technical progress, they often cannot or do not properly implement their plans.

1) Let's Play a Game

For instance, let's assume that directing technical development is possible in the context of a nation-state, which is really the highest level of control most people can argue for without proposing a universal government. In this is case, if technics are just a tool in the hand of the "good" prevailing power, then they are just as much a tool in the hand of a "bad" prevailing power. And technics are difficult to control, some, like computer code, practically impossible. Short of a global government, and an extremely well managed one at that, we can be sure that at least some "bad" state actors will get ahold of technics that are quite powerful. And the real question is whether technics can reach a certain level of power that the risk of "bad" actors getting ahold of them simply isn't worth it. Nuclear proliferation was a major example of this for a long time, but newer technics make nuclear look like child's play. Biological weapons, nanotechnology, and artificial intelligence all present much graver threats. Few people realize how simple it is to build a biological weapon. If we consider that not even a global government could prevent terrorism, and if we consider that these technologies give a tremendous amount of power to rather small and organized groups, the answer we should tend toward becomes clear.

In fact, the actors in question don't even need to be "bad." Game theory and various other cooperation puzzles reveal that even "good" or neutral actors could unwittingly engage in behaviors that lead to their demise. The classic example is the tragedy of the commons, a puzzle in which actors use a given resource according to their own self-interest, but also in ways which deplete the resource for everyone using it. Several other puzzles, like the prisoner's dilemma or wars of attrition, illustrate that proper control over technical development is simply not possible, and things are bound to get out of control. Once again, this need not be true in an absolute sense. It is enough to note that technics are getting so powerful that even the threat of things getting out of hand is simply too much of a risk; and, of course, it invalidates many fantastical schemes for controlling Progress that some argue "ensures" that we can do good with technics.

2) Accidental Progress

Stemming from the fact that humans can't know enough to direct technical development, accidental inventions or chains of events also cause problems for implementing rational blueprints. Consider that many technics and scientific discoveries were invented or discovered by accident, including anesthesia, x-rays, dynamite, electromagnetism, ozone, radioactivity, and penicillin. Many times these accidental inventions or discoveries change the technical landscape profoundly, invalidating any previous blueprint or efforts to implement it. This is unavoidable; no scheme could overcome such a limitation.

3) Human Folly and Human Limits

Then there's the fact that humans simply aren't primarily rational creatures, so their attempts to implement blueprints are going to suffer consequences that stem from their inept wetware. Of course, this was far less of a problem in the Pleistocene environment under which our brains evolved, but in our modern, mismatched environments human reason suffers some serious setbacks that together are called "bounded rationality."

The psychologist Daniel Kahneman illustrated a series of such problems in his excellent book, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. One example he gives recalls an experiment in which he and the psychologist Amos Tversky told participants about an imaginary character named Linda. Linda, the story went, was single, smart, and outspoken on the issues of discrimination and social justice. After explaining this, the two psychologists asked if it was more probable for Linda to be a bank teller or for Linda to be a bank teller who was active in the feminist movement. Of course, basic lessons in statistical probability would reveal that the first answer is the correct one. Only a subset of all bank tellers are feminist bank tellers, so adding the extra detail will necessarily decrease the probability. But most participants said the second answer was correct.

Another phenomenon Kahneman reports is called the "availability heuristic," which means that the easier something comes to mind, the more probable the human mind will judge it to be. For example, Kahneman and Tversky (1973) asked participants in one experiment to judge whether words that began with the letter k were more probable, or whether words with k as their third letter were more probable. Because we recall words by their onsets, words beginning with the letter k are easier to recall. Thus, the duo predicted, rightly, that participants would judge words beginning with k as more likely, even though the opposite is true. One could repeat this experiment using almost any letter.

The availability heuristic helps explain why people seem to fear things in a way that is totally incongruent with statistical probabilities. For example, death by falling furniture is much more likely than death by murder, but because it is easier to recall instances of murder, perhaps from the news or even novels, people fear it significantly more. This may explain why individuals in nations with extremely low crime rates but oversaturated with news media suffer from undull anxiety about crime.

These heuristics have implications for moral reasoning as well. In his book, Kahneman describes two kinds of systems in the human brain. System 1 is intuitive, fast thinking, and it utilizes various shortcuts in order to come to conclusions. For all its imperfections, System 1 can be surprisingly accurate, especially when making decisions closer to the kinds our Stone Age counterparts would have made. In contrast, System 2 is analytical, slow thinking, the part of the mind that humans use to write or do complicated math. Kahneman argues that the fast, intuitive system is more influential and that individuals often act on its conclusions without the analytical mind ever even knowing about it. But just imagine what this means for humans making split-second moral decisions with big consequences, like dropping a bomb or initiating a drone strike. Or even just imagine what this means for humans who run large and ostensibly benign systems that might also require split-second decision-making, like nuclear facilities.

Finally, there are the most unsettling biological limitations of all, which also happen to be the ones that brush up against the topic of morality most directly. One of the most striking of these is our inability to reason about moral obligations to large populations. For example, Slovic (2007) once conducted an experiment in which he told volunteers about a starving girl, measured their willingness to donate, and then told the same story to another group but with the added detail that millions of others were also starving. The second group gave around half as much money as the first. In fact, Slovic found that even adding just one more person would begin the process of "psychic numbing."

Slovic's finding that humans have a hard time reasoning about large numbers of people is in some ways unsurprising. In fact, it is a hallmark problem of population ethics. Churchland (2011, p. 178) put it this way: "no one has the slightest idea how to compare the mild headache of five million against the broken legs of two, or the needs of one's own two children against the needs of a hundred unrelated brain-damaged children in Serbia." The evolutionary explanation for this is that humans have never had to deal with such large numbers of people, so conditions didn't encourage the evolution of mental mechanisms that would allow us to do so intuitively. It may be that we can use Kahneman's analytical System 2 to conquer the problem, but it may also be that our analytical mind isn't equipped to deal with it at all. Whichever happens to be correct, it is clear that humans are unlikely to provide proper ethical direction to technical development.

C. Rational Blueprints Do Not Go As Planned

> *For three decades, we've sought to solve [these] problems…and the more the plans fail, the more the planners plan.*

—Ronald Reagan

As is to be expected from a world where human knowledge is limited and human ability constrained, even when some individual or group attempts to implement their blueprints in all the right ways, their blueprints rarely go as planned.

1) Calendar Reform

Some great examples of this include numerous attempts at calendar reform. The Gregorian calendar is notoriously inefficient, especially for industrial economic purposes. Indeed, the inefficiency has resulted in loss of large sums of money and several lives, motivating many to popularize calendars much more suited to their industrial purposes (99% Invisible, 2015). They have all failed. This includes the *Positivist calendar*, created by August Comte; the *Pax calendar*; the *International Fixed Calendar*; the *World Calendar*; the *French Republican Calendar*; the *Invariable Calendar*; the *World Season Calendar*, created by Isaac Asimov; and the *Tranquility Calendar*. To give a sense of the scope of their failure, some of these were even proposals in international organizations like the League of Nations but nevertheless failed to be implemented.

2) Failed Utopias

City planning is also a field notorious for failed schemes. It's not that city planning doesn't work—it often does—but perhaps more than any other field it demonstrates how rational blueprints can work only when they are limited in scope and when they aid technical and economic developments already under way. For instance, most successful city planning projects focus on aesthetics and the general structure of a city, and even then usually only in cities where the economy is already functional. Attempts to build cities and then build an economy have to my knowledge always failed, and this is demonstrable especially in utopian schemes of over-zealous planners.

A famous example is Paolo Soleri's "Arcosanti," a city he designed from scratch in order to demonstrate the principles of "arcology," or ecologically-informed architecture, the dogma of modern "green planners." Arcosanti is an odd, futuristic city that, although capable of supporting around 5,000 humans, has only a population of around 80, mostly dreadlocked alternative-culture types. The Japanese corporation Shimizu tried to implement another arcological project in 2004, but it has similarly failed (Keller, 2015).

These examples reflect the similar and ubiquitous failure of utopian communities that became common in the U.S. in the 1800s. The Nashoba community, for instance, closed its doors within a year of its debut; and only months after the creation of New Harmony, one of the most famous utopian communities, various groups splintered off from each other and the project failed.

With all these examples, it should not surprise anyone that the most striking planning project of all was met with equally striking failure. I refer, of course, to communism. Harris (1992) explains, for instance, that Soviet communism failed precisely because its ideologically-derived social structure was not suited to infrastructural conditions, something communist dogma ignored. Whether or not Soviet communism equals real communism is irrelevant; the point is that the management scheme that *was* attempted failed, and for probably similar reasons that calendar reform, utopian cities, and ambitious city planning projects frequently fail as well: humans just aren't as powerful as they think.

3) Biosphere 2

One might, of course, argue that there are at least some cases where humans have knowledge and power enough to control some system. Indeed, humans have already attempted to gain such a level of knowledge and power in creating a now-infamous project known as "Biosphere 2." And it too failed. Twice.

Biosphere 2 was an attempt by some scientists to create a totally controlled ecological system with five biomes roughly equal to most biomes on Earth. It was a highly popularized project, with implications for biologists, ecologists, and various technicians' dreams of space colonization, because it offered, or was to supposed to offer, a way for scientists to carefully control variables and learn how, precisely, ecosystems work.

However, Biosphere 2 suffered from frenzied CO2 levels that caused many species to die, including most vertebrates. Pest insects prospered, and some species killed off and dominated other species. The humans inhabiting the system ultimately had to leave. (And some scientists are still considering geo-engineering as a response to climate change!)

The second time around failed largely because of disputes between the scientists, compounded by alleged vandalism by some of the more upset individuals. This may seem irrelevant, but it is in fact highly germane, since it reminds us to temper our planning schemes with greater awareness that it is humans coming up with and implementing them.

Tainter and Patzek (2012), in their book about the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill, summarize all these points thusly:

The Deepwater Horizon *was a normal accident, a system accident. Complex technologies have...ways of failing that humans cannot foresee. The probability of similar accidents may now be reduced, but it can be reduced to zero only when declining [energy returns] makes deep-sea production energetically unprofitable. It is fashionable to think that we will be able to produce renewable energies with gentler technologies, with simpler machines that produce less damage to the earth, the atmosphere, and people. We all hope so, but we must approach such technologies with a dose of realism and a long-term perspective*

D. Rational Blueprints Always Have Unintended Consequences

The chief source of problems is solutions.

—Sevareid's Law

Ultimately stemming from the fact that humans don't know enough, even rational blueprints that are perfectly implemented always have unintended consequences.

Let's assume that industrial medicine, a highly successful industry by most accounts, was rationally implemented and not evolved. Even it suffers from profound unintended consequences like antimicrobial resistance, which is creating an increasingly dangerous situation. One might also note that medicine has itself caused medical problems. As one article puts it, "There is increasing evidence that the [mismatch between human biologies and civilized conditions] fosters 'diseases of civilization' that together cause 75 percent of all deaths in Western nations, but that are rare among persons whose lifeways reflect those of our preagricultural ancestors" (Eaton, Konner, & Shostak, 1988).

Or consider that most technical innovations supposed to decrease human work have actually increased it. For instance, cell phones and PCs, by making communication and several other business functions more efficient, did not decrease the workday; instead, the workday began bleeding into the home, often without wage compensation.

Or consider the related Jevon's Paradox, whereby increased efficiency in production will actually lead to more consumption, not less.

Tenner covers many of these unintended consequences in his book *Why Things Bite Back: Technology and the Revenge of Unintended Consequences*. He focuses especially on medicine, but also agriculture, sports, and office work. In the end one is thoroughly convinced

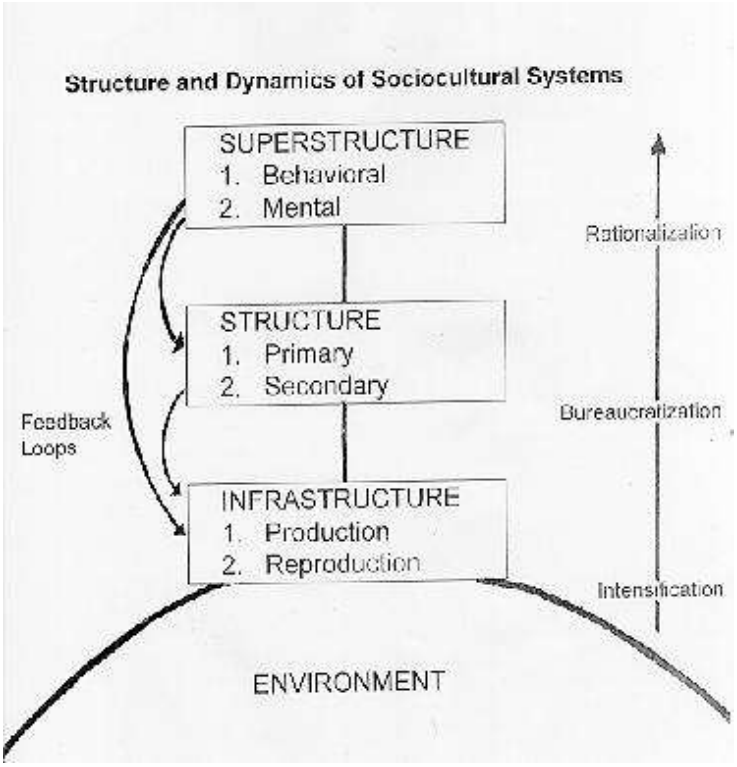

Figure 1. Demonstration of Harris' "universal structure of society," from Elwell.

that unintended consequences are simply a part of technical development, especially because so many depend on the oddities of human behavior. He writes, for instance, "when a safety system encourages enough additional risk-taking that it helps cause accidents, that is a revenge effect." In the end, however, he falls into the trap most do: he proposes more "finesse" and "moderation" in developing and applying technology—a technical system to control the technical system! By now, however, it should be clear that such a thing is impossible.

III. An Alternative Model of Technical Development

One might wonder how technical development proceeds if humans don't control it. Luckily, the budding field of cultural evolution, as well as some old insights from Marx, Darwin, and Malthus, provide us with some paths for investigation. Within this field of cultural evolution is the specific problem of technical evolution, which holds that technics are not directed, but evolve, and the illusion that they require an intelligent designer is akin to the same illusion produced by complex biological systems.

As of yet there is no comprehensive theory of technical evolution. We do know, however, that it will involve a synthesis of at least two domains—cultural ecology and

sociobiology—and that it will involve a resolution of the controversy between group selectionists and kin selectionists in evolutionary theory. What follows is a brief review of our current knowledge.

A. Cultural Materialism

The best theory in cultural ecology, by scientific standards, is Marvin Harris' "cultural materialism," a synthesis of the cultural evolutionism of Leslie White, the findings of Darwin, the scientific aspects of Marxist theory, and the demographic emphasis of Malthus. The most in-depth exposition of Harris' theory is in his book aptly entitled *Cultural Materialism: The Quest for a Science of Culture*, in which he describes the theory's epistemological foundations, its basic principles, and reasons why it prevails over the alternatives.

For our purposes, the most relevant part of the theory is his outline of the universal structure of society. He argues that cultures are composed of three components: an infrastructure, a structure, and a superstructure, each metaphorically stacked on top of each other, and each of the bottom layers probabilistically determining the character of those higher up.

The infrastructure is composed of two elements. The first, the mode of production, consists of the material technics and economics by which a society harnesses natural energy for efficient production of necessities, like food and energy. Common modes of production are hunting-and-gatherering, pastoralism, agriculture, and industry. The second, the mode of reproduction, is the sexual and reproductive practices of a society, like birth control and infanticide. These two elements together, plus the given natural context of geography and ecology, make up the raw materials on which a society is built. As a result, no element of society can transcend these infrastructural limits, and in attempting to explain a certain culture, we should look to the infrastructure first. Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel* is one example of this approach.

The second level of society, the structure, is the pattern of social relationships within a given infrastructural context, meant to properly distribute, secure, and stabilize the use of the infrastructure's products. This includes things like certain economic institutions, divisions of labor, governments, NGOs, etc.

The final level of society, the superstructure, is the collective mythology of a culture—its science, its religion, its cultural narratives, and so forth. These secure an individual's commitment to the structure's way of managing resources, and they are, again, probabilistically determined by the structure and infrastructure.

The implications of the theory are what one would expect. Humans, for instance, have reduced agency, something that many have criticized Harris for, but which seems to be correct, regardless of how unsettling it is to some. Since superstructure is determined by lower levels, it cannot be a source of large-scale social change. That is, simply changing men's minds will do nothing if the actual structure of a society doesn't change, and a structure can't change if infrastructural limits don't allow it. There are feedback loops between each level, especially since the higher levels maintain the stability of human being's relationship to the lower levels, and affecting these feedback loops can determine the character and speed of social collapse. But overall humans are still very much at the whim of elements much more powerful than their own power and will. Furthermore, because societies are complex systems, it is not always clear how feedback loops function, so the effects of an ideological social force on the structure and infrastructure are frequently unpredictable. This is why the determinism is "probabilistic."

B. Sociobiology

One thing Harris got quite wrong was his position on human nature. He advocated a "blank slate" idea of nature, believing it to consist of only basic desires and believing that that primary method by which humans respond to their environment is through cultural adaptation. This idea was in vogue when he was devising his theories and is still quite strong among some academics. However, the cognitive revolution and the new science of sociobiology have demonstrated that the theory is wrong, and that human nature is actually not very blank at all (Pinker, 2002).

Often a broad argument employed by blank slatists is the "complexity" of human social life, something that they can't accept is the result of "instinct" alone. But apart from the fact that sociobiology does not rest solely on the concept of "instincts," this is a weak argument. Animals who it is generally agreed have only instincts are incredibly complex social creatures—ants, whales, dogs.

Then there's the success of sociobiology in explaining *altruism* (Pinker, 2011; Wilson, 1975; Barkow, Cosmides, & Tooby, 1995; Dawkins, 1976), *cultural universals* (Pinker, 2002), *incest taboos* (Barkow, Cosmides, & Tooby, 1995; Shepher, 1971), *infanticide* (Daly & Wilson, 1988), *human violence* (Rice, 2013; Pinker, 2011; Wilson, 1975; Daly & Wilson, 1988), *rape* (Thornhill & Palmer, 2001), *facial expressions* as a form of social communication (Ekman, et al., 1987; Eibl-

Eibesfeldt, 2007), etc., and in such a way as to yield fruitful and accurate predictions. This would be impossible if the theory was not very accurate itself. By all accounts, then, it has won, despite the controversy that met it at its birth (Alcock, 2003).

In fact, sociobiology is such a well-researched and established science that any synthesis between it and cultural ecology is likely to subsume cultural ecology than the other way around. Indeed, dual inheritance theory, also gene-culture evolution, is the most promising place for synthesis, and is based primarily on sociobiological insights. It argues that genetic and cultural evolution influence one another, the research possibly making our understanding of the aforementioned "feedback loops" more concrete than now. For more on dual inheritance, see Lumsden & Wilson, 2005 and the work of Boyd & Richerson.

C. Group Selection versus Kin Selection

One of the main hurdles for any synthesis is the conflict between kin selection theory and group selection theory. The former, which is the dominant view in the biological sciences, holds that behaviors, like altruism, evolve because of "inclusive fitness," or the fact that a behavior will dominate when it benefits genes of related creatures. Dawkins and an earlier Wilson famously espoused this theory in *The Selfish Gene* and *Sociobiology*, respectively. In fact, kin selection is now dominant because of a critique launched by a cadre of biologists including Dawkins, John Maynard Smith (1965), and G. C. Williams (1966), who argued that group selection was not only weak and confused, but unnecessary to explain available data.

Group selection theory argues that natural selection sometimes operates on the group, not only the individual, as kin selectionists argue. Although overthrown in the 60s, it has since returned in its modern incarnation as "multi-level selection theory" and boasts big names, like David Sloan Wilson and now one of the formerly fierce defenders of kin selection, Edward Wilson. The latter's about-face has put him into public conflict with Richard Dawkins, but he has stood firmly by his view, and in a *Nature* article authored by two others, he laid out the reasons for his view, which elicited a negative response from more than 150 scientists.

Some have argued that the difference between the two theories may simply be semantic, not empirical, including one of the scientists who popularized the concept of inclusive fitness, W. D. Hamilton. This may be true in some simplistic sense, but the theories differ in one important

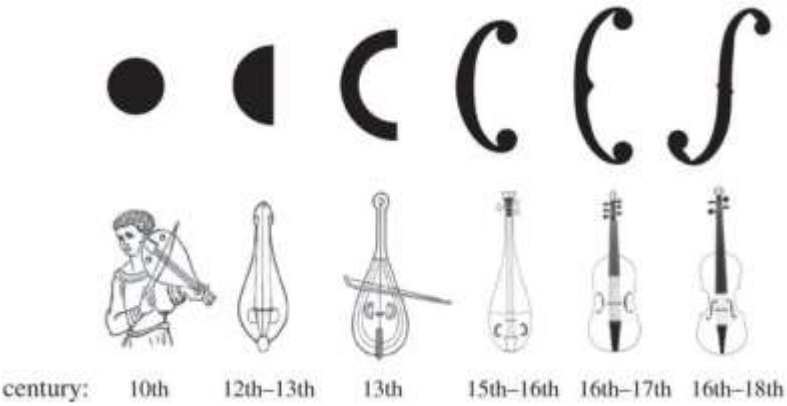

Figure 2. Development of the violin f-hole over time. From Nia et. al (2015).

respect, namely, where they grant causal priority. Other differences, such as how the theories compare in simplicity and parsimony, also matter.

The conundrum is this: most of the work on cultural evolution and coevolution has been done on the basis of group selection theory. Luckily, because there is so much empirical overlap, kin selectionists need not dismiss all the work completely. They do, however, have more work set out before them.

Furthermore, it seems that at least some differences between kin selection and group selection are political. For instance, David Sloan Wilson, who has dedicated his life to defending group selection theory, unabashedly employs it in support of his progressivist politics, as has E. O. Wilson in his recent *The Social Conquest of Earth*. This greatly complicates the terrain any scientific view must master. The trick is to choose a theory regardless of political bias and do whatever work is necessary from there. Either way, the tension is one that needs to be resolved for any comprehensive theory.

D. Analogy and Example for Understanding

In order to understand the actual process of technical evolution, imagine human intention as the "motor" for much of the evolutionary process (although not all of it), and selection pressures that include more than and are more powerful than human intention as the steering wheel deciding the direction of collective human choices.

Consider this analogy. In a version of UNO I often play with my family on holidays, individuals keep a tally of how many points are in their hand after each round has ended. When someone surpasses 500 points, the game ends, and the winner is the person with the least number of points. However, if someone hits 500 exactly, they go back to zero. Sometimes individuals end up with a number of points very close to 500, and they begin to think they can manage to keep just the right amount of points

in their hand so that when someone else goes out, they will have 500 points exactly, go back to zero, and have a shot at winning again. The problem is that no matter how much skill and reason someone puts into trying to reach 500 exactly, there are still an enormous amount of factors that the person could never control, and that ultimately determine whether he will actually achieve his goal. Reason isn't enough. Cultural evolution works similarly.

Nia et al. (2015) provide a real example of this idea as applied to violin acoustics. They analyze 470 instruments across several centuries and note that the change of the shape of the "f-hole" on either side of the violin strings was "gradual—and consistent" (see Figure 2). They demonstrate that as each change provided superior sound, the creators replicated them at the expense of inferior designs. This occurred until the changes reached equilibrium with current f-shape. Note that the forces behind this change were not only or even predominantly human intention; instead, markets and physics were stronger determinants.

A final example: in a fascinating excerpt from *The Evolution of Everything*, Matt Ridley points out some trends in technical development occur with such regularity that humans control is unlikely to be the cause. Instead, Ridley writes, these regularities suggest that technics evolve:

> *…some scientists have begun to notice that cities themselves evolve in predictable ways. There is a spontaneous order in the way they grow and change. The most striking of these regularities is the 'scaling' that cities show – how their features change with size. For example, the number of petrol stations increases at a consistently slower rate than the population of the city. There are economies of scale, and this pattern is the same in every part of the world. The same is true of electrical networks. So it does not matter what the policy of the country, or the mayor, is. Cities will converge on the same patterns of growth wherever they are. In this they are very like bodies. A mouse burns more energy, per unit of body weight, than an elephant; a small city burns proportionately more motor fuel than a large one. Like cities, bodies get more efficient in their energy consumption the larger they grow. There is also a consistent 15 per cent saving on infrastructure cost per head for every doubling of a city's population size.*
>
> *The opposite is true of economic growth and innovation—the bigger the city, the faster these increase. Doubling the size of a city boosts income, wealth, number of patents, number of universities, number of creative people, all by approximately 15 per cent, regardless of where the city is. The scaling is, in the jargon, 'superlinear'. Geoffrey West of the Santa Fe Institute, who discovered this phenomenon, calls cities 'supercreative'. They generate a disproportionate share of human innovation; and the bigger they are, the more they generate. The reason for this is clear, at least in outline. Human beings innovate by combining and recombining ideas, and the larger and denser the network, the more innovation occurs. Once again, notice that this is not policy. Indeed, nobody was aware of the supercreative effect of cities until very recently, so no policy-maker could aim for it. It's an evolutionary phenomenon.*

IV. The Consequences of Technical Autonomy

When we see an animal behave differently in a zoo than in the wild, we reasonably attribute this behavior to the influence of the artificial environment, and very often there is an understanding that a caged animal is worse off than a wild one, or at least that caging animals is not a moral imperative. But when it comes to humans, this logic seems not to apply, often because people assume that technical development is fully an expression of human nature, that humans are optionally building the technical cages and then walking in them.

But technical autonomy invalidates this human exceptionalism. It is feasible, indeed much more probable, that humans are being caged, domesticated, and artificially dominated by technical environments just as much as wild animals are. Of course, progressivists argue that good things have come from this, like less violence overall and longer life expectancies. In fact, it is because civilization does these things that humanists argue for development and the civilizing process. But this would be like saying wild animals should be caged because most of them have longer life expectancies or because some of them become less violent (more lethargic) in captivity. In fact, many "self-actualizing" or "creative" endeavors industrial humans engage in from boredom have parallels for zoo animals, and animals that behave in such odd ways in zoos are said to have "zoochosis"—it isn't a good thing.

We might also note that to combat these odd behaviors, zookeepers often put out distractions like toys, food

that takes a long time to eat, and other such things. This is oddly similar to the video games, sports, and television programs meant to distract modern man from his unease. And I'm sure we've all heard of the need for "more social programs" so that local youth don't "get themselves into trouble." This is viewed as necessary, and of course it is if we are to preserve the city that is dependent on controllability.

To further extend the analogy to humans, which may or may not hold out as significant in actual research, we might note the similarity of odd behaviors in captive animals and industrial humans: self-mutilation, vomiting, over-grooming, increased stress, and abnormal sexual practices, just to name a few. And, just like humans, "the gorillas, badgers, giraffes, belugas, or wallabies on the other side of the glass are taking Valium, Prozac, or antipsychotics to deal with their lives as display animals" (Smith L. , 2014).

These findings make the field of sociobiology highly relevant, since it and its sister and daughter fields reveal human behavior in wild conditions, possibly also revealing the ways that behavior changes in civilized and especially industrial conditions. This of course does not prescribe any moral view, but as the contrast between our wild and civilized conditions becomes clearer, the common value of *wildness* will likely become a core element of future moralities challenging technical development and progressivism.

V. Conclusion

Technical evolution is akin to biological evolution in that both purge from our minds the delusion of a rational creator guiding the process from above. In the case of biology this creator is God, of course; and in the case of culture, and more specifically technics, the creator is humankind.

I've presented several lines of evidence to support the fact that technical evolution is not only true, but necessarily true given material limits to human knowledge and ability. Humans can neither know enough to control technics, nor can or do they properly implement what they do know, nor do their implementations go as planned, nor do they ever implemen plans without unintended side effects.

Unfortunately, we've yet to have a comprehensive alternative theory, but we do have several leads and quite a bit of groundwork covered. Mostly the present work is synthesizing the theoretical frameworks of cultural ecology and sociobiology and addressing the unresolved tension between kin selection and group selection theory.

The implications of technical autonomy are far-reaching, especially since they challenge the humanist argument that civilization is good for humans. This is not, of course, inherent in the empirical findings, but it is implicit since so many regard *naturalness* and *wildness* as desirable qualities, and they are consequently skeptical of attempts at domination through cages or domestication. As a result, it would be unsurprising to see a morality based around wildness become the dominant challenge to progressivism in upcoming years.

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Briefly Noted: Letters and Reviews

Who is involved in Hunter/Gatherer? — John Jacobi

Myra from Colorado writes, "I'm unsure of that status of wildism and *Hunter/Gatherer*. Although you write like it is a collective effort, it looks like you are one of the only people involved. Can you clarify this for me?"

I am, to date, the only person who has produced original content for *Hunter/Gatherer*. I knew this would be the case when I started the newsletter, since there are few wildists who speak English well enough to write in it, who write well in general, who like to write, or who would be willing to go public as wildists. In spite of this, I took on this project because there was an enormous need for theoretical, philosophical, and strategic literature within the budding wildist movement, and I believed I could fill that gap. As a result, right now I refer to *Hunter/Gatherer* as a newsletter, not a journal, and am open about the fact that it is mostly my own project. Still, I expect to put more effort into getting submissions from other folks by the time we reach volume two.

As for the movement as a whole, wildists are a quiet bunch, which is predictable given the repercussions of the ideology, but there are some active projects other than *Hunter/Gatherer*. Notably, *The Wildernist* is a public-facing conservation magazine that Jonah Howell has restarted (see below), and Jeremy Grolman runs both *Blog for Wild Nature* and a Facebook page entitled "Memes for Wild Nature." Two other wildists hope to produce a podcast by the end of the summer.

The Wildernist is restarting — John Jacobi

I'm very happy to announce that my previous publication, *The Wildernist*, is restarting under the direction of another wildist, conservationist, and fellow student, Jonah Howell. You can read his editorial greeting by visiting the magazine homepage at `www.thewildernist.org`.

The Unterrified interviewed John Jacobi — John Jacobi

Although the wildist movement is a small one, it is loosely connected to a larger "anti-civilization" sentiment among political radicals. One such radical is Benett Freeman from Australia, who runs a podcast with his associate Entito Sevrano called *The Unterrified*. Freeman's anti-civilization sentiment is in no way a wildist one, but our conversation was mostly productive. He split it into three parts.

In the first I address some of my predictions regarding the future of technical development; wildist goals and strategy; the meaning of "wildness" and "naturalness" in wildist discourse; and escapism.

In the second I address the bad press some anarchists released about the wildist movement on `anarchist-news.org`; the different meanings of "ideology" utilized by self-proclaimed non-ideological activists and wildists; escapism, again; more on strategy and tactics; and materialism.

And in the third and final part, I address materialism and science again, a recurring hang-up various anti-civilization activists have against wildist theory; escapism again; the feasibility of an anti-industrial reaction; some clarifications regarding the purpose of The Wildist Institute; and some information I covered more thoroughly in the essay, "Technical Autonomy," provided in this issue.

On the whole the podcast episodes demonstrate how my conversations usually go with other radicals, including the non-productive parts. Readers should know that given my previous interactions with Freeman, I expected a much less friendly conversation, however, so both I and he regard it a success. You can listen to the podcast by visiting `www.theunterrified.com`.

The Dark Mountain Project at `www.dark-mountain.net` — John Jacobi

I have been a long-time associate with people working on the Dark Mountain Project. Although I have by now concluded that it poses no material threat to industrial society, it has been highly successful at getting out anti-civilization ideas, and it does well in appealing to the irrational, emotive sides of our industrial despair, something wildists have proved to be deficient in communicating so far. I strongly recommend that readers pay attention to the writings that show up on the website, buy a few of the books, and, especially, read the *Uncivilisation* manifesto that started the whole thing.

Whither Leftism? — John Jacobi

Early in the development of the wildist ideology, I and others made frequent reference to "leftism." Our use and

understanding of the term came primarily from Kaczynski's manifesto, *Industrial Society and Its Future* and some theories in cognitive and evolutionary psychology. However, current wildists no longer use the term, because it has always suffered from some serious problems. First of all, it is theoretically vague, encapsulating several distinct tendencies that are present even in many non-leftist movements. Second, it is alienating in a way that is not helpful, because many understand leftism to refer exclusively to the political left, when wildists actually meant for it to signify a certain set of values. And third, some associated but very, very different movements have come to use the term in a fashion that only confuses. I refer specifically to the anarcho-primitivists, who largely belong to and were birthed from the New Left, which derided the Old Left with the term "leftism" without giving up on the fundamental values. In general, they only use "leftism" to mean organizationalism, class reductionism, an emphasis on ideology, and some other things. I explain these various meanings of the term in "A Sketch of Wildism in Contrast to Leftism," published in *The Wildernist 2: First Steps*.

Current wildist discourse breaks the tendencies it referred to into two parts. The first is *opportunism*, or the tendency for some individuals to flock to mass movements because of their psychological needs, careers, or other reasons, but caring very little for the cause itself. This has been common on the left at least since the 60s, when a whole activist class was left wanting for revolt after many of its movements succeeded. However, it is a distinct phenomenon and can be found among non-leftist individuals as well.

The second tendency is *progressivism*, or a class of philosophies that argue for Progress in its various social, material, and technical forms. Progressivism includes many different ideologies like racial colonial narratives and Christianity, but its dominant form today is *humanism*, which we emphasize especially. Humanism was birthed from Christianity and is the basis for many other ideologies like transhumanism or philosophies underpinning animal rights. It replaced "leftism" as the means by which wildists indicate the dominant values of late, or techno-industrial, society: equality, indiscriminate sympathy for victims, and solidarity with all of humanity. In the main, humanism would be considered a left-wing philosophy, but most of civilization has seen a leftward drift in ideologies precisely because that is what technical conditions demand, so it is sometimes hard to distinguish the modern right from the modern left. This makes "humanism" a much more illustrative word; it is far less confusing for newcomers; and it allows wildists to avoid useless and distracting questions that come out of the term "leftism."

Political versus Philosophical Nihilism — John Jacobi

I write in "Ideology and Revisionism" that philosophically wildism can be categorized as a nihilist philosophy and an egoist philosophy. However, a clarification is in order. Some brands of anarchism are now calling themselves "egoist nihilists," and while their egoism is sometimes something they hold in common with wildists, their nihilism usually is not. Egoist nihilists interpret "nihilism" to mean a disbelief in revolution rather than a philosophical position on objective values and morality. They are, therefore, two distinct things. Furthermore, although wildists can technically be classified as egoists, we almost always refer to ourselves only as wildists, because our egoism is very particular and bound to the core aspects of the wildist philosophy, and because "egoism" is associated with many political tendencies that have nothing to do with wildness, nature, and conservation. This is the same reason we disdain the label "anarchist."

